

m: o

HONEST

<

ALTERNATIVES TO GREAT OTE

Mikhail MILTYUKHOV Sergey KREMLEV Alexander PATIENTS Dmitry KHMELNITSKY Andrey
BUROVSKII | Alexey ISAEV Valentin RUNOV | Victor SUVOROV Vladislav SAVIN | Mikhail BARYATINSKY

FIRST

Stalin's IMPACT

BC

UDC 355/359

BBK 68 g I 85

Design by artist S. Kurbatov

Isaev A.V.

I 85 Stalin's First Strike 1941 / Alexei Isaev, Victor Suvorov, Mikhail Baryatinsky. - M. : Yauza : Eksmo, 2010.
- 352 p. — (Alternatives of the Great Patriotic War).

IBM 978-5-699-43818-1

The tragedy of 1941 left such a deep wound in the people's memory that the scar continues to hurt even seven decades later - fierce disputes about the causes and perpetrators of the disaster still do not subside, and most importantly, whether it could have been avoided.

The most sensational alternative was proposed by Viktor Suvorov, who claims that in the summer of 1941 Stalin himself was preparing to attack Nazi Germany and that if the Red Army had managed to strike first, "catching the Germans in the swing", the Wehrmacht would have been defeated in a matter of weeks. However, on this issue, even many of his supporters disagree with Suvorov, who are sure that in the event of a preemptive strike, the Soviet troops would still suffer a crushing defeat, as evidenced by the unsuccessful actions of the Red Army against Finland.

Whose point of view is closer to the truth? Would STALIN'S FIRST STRIKE lead to the triumph of the Red Army - or a defeat even more terrible than in the current reality? And was such a blow even possible? All these questions are answered by leading military historians.

UDC 355/359 BBK 68

© Isaev A.V., 2010

© Suvorov V., 2010

© Baryatinsky M.B., 2010

© Meltyukhov M.I., 2010

© Kremlev S., 2010

© Patients A.G., 2010

© Khmel'nitsky D.S., 2010

© Burovsky A.M., 2010

© Runov V.A., 2010

© Savin V.O., 2010

© Yauza Publishing House LLC, 2010 IVM 978-5-699-43818-1 © Eksmo Publishing House LLC, 2010

Alexey Isaev

RANDOM AND REGULARITIES

in the spring and summer of 1941, there were no violations of the border at all

were an out of the ordinary incident in Gena

ral-governorship. However, the Red Army soldiers who got lost usually tried to leave the territory of a foreign state as quickly as possible. The same soldier with the insignia of the Red Army, on the contrary, immediately rushed towards the German patrol. He repeated only one word "Angrif! Angrif" (offensive - German). The soldier was soaked to the skin: it was clear that he had swum across the Bug. The defector was taken to headquarters. "A volunteer assistant of the Wehrmacht with a white bandage on his arm, confused, hastily translated to the officer the words of an unexpected guest from the USSR. However, with all the shortcomings of the translation, the main idea was clear: the Red Army would soon cross the border and strike at Germany. The defector was drafted in the western regions of Ukraine recently annexed to the USSR and was by no means eager to take part in the war in the ranks of the Workers 'and Peasants' Red Army. Even before the end of the interrogation, a call to the higher headquarters followed. It cannot be said that this information caused surprise there: intelligence reports in recent days have been more and more alarming. However, in the headquarters preparing for Operation Barbarossa, these reports were perceived only as quite expected countermeasures by the Red Army in the face of a possible attack. Now events were taking an unexpected turn. Soon hundreds of thousands of people were on the move. Soldiers and officers of the infantry units of the Wehrmacht occupied positions in the border fortifications. The agonizing wait did not last long: literally the next morning, artillery preparation thundered. The war has begun...

I will describe with such inserts in italics episodes of a war that never happened: the first strike of the Red Army in 1941. Please do not forget that the real events were much more terrible and tragic. However, please treat this with indulgence: the analysis of alternative scenarios for the development of events is one of the tools for studying history. This is a kind of thought experiment that allows us to understand the key points and evaluate the most significant factors of real events. Lyrical digressions with modeling of events are only intended to illustrate the analysis of the situation and options for the development of hostilities. Imagine that these are lines from a history book that would have been written as a result of an alternative development of events.

BIG POLITICS

The blow to Hitler first is traditionally negatively assessed in Russian literature. However, one cannot say that this point of view is dominant. Nevertheless, sometimes even words are heard that Stalin did the right thing, that he waited for Hitler's attack and did not attack himself. This allegedly gave undeniable moral advantages. However, this appears to be an attempt to put a good face on a bad game. This fact did not give any moral advantage that outweighs everything and everything.

Germany has already discredited itself sufficiently and has sufficiently shown itself as an aggressor. Therefore, going to war against her could hardly be interpreted as aggression. The situation with Finland in 1939 was still fundamentally different. Doubts about an adequate assessment of the entry of the USSR into the war with a strike against Germany stem not least from the demonization of the West.

However, the demonized West has about the same attitude to reality as

golly

Woods Soviet general drinking vodka from touag in between games with a trained bear. The West had its own interests and the annihilation of both "the world's first state of workers and peasants" and Russia in one form or another has never been her bhe Western countries. I am not talking here about individual politicians, but about the general tendencies of European and Anglo-American politics. A more rigid division into two opposing camps occurred only with the beginning of the Cold War.

The political and military realities of 1941 were still fundamentally different from the realities of 1947 or 1950-1960. On the foreign policy front, the entry of the USSR into the war with Hitler would in any case be perceived as a return to the club of the Forces of Good. From which he was excluded first due to the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact (but that was still half the trouble), and then due to the attack on Finland and the forcible annexation of the Baltic states.

Speaking of Finland. It is quite possible that in the event of the first strike of the Red Army, Finland would freeze its plans to enter the war together with the Germans. However, even if the Finnish leadership had maintained its previous course, it would hardly have had an immediate impact on the course of hostilities.

In terms of internal propaganda, the explanation for "why did we start in the first place?" will, of course, not be an easy task. However, to a certain extent, this will correspond to the slogans of the pre-war propaganda about "little blood" and "foreign territory" (in their pop perception). In addition, the best propaganda for the correctness of the chosen course has always been military success. Or, to put it mildly, the absence of major failures. The loss of first newly acquired in 1939-1940. lands, and then Minsk, Smolensk, Kyiv was a much more significant blow to the public consciousness than the hypothetical moral torment regarding the burden of responsibility for the first shots. If we place on one side of the scale the blow of the first, and on the other -

7

the loss of a large territory and the bombing of cities in the interior of the country, then the second cup clearly outweighs. Many people simply lost faith in victory, began to doubt the expediency of the sacrifices. In concentrated form, it looked something like this: "If we still lose (lose), then who will need my death?" Also, large and obvious failures inevitably raised doubts about the effectiveness of the country's top leadership. Just in case, I emphasize: "major and obvious failures." That is, those that cannot be hidden by means of military censorship and which will have to be recognized publicly in the press and on the radio in the voice of Levitan. The failure of the encirclement of Samsonov's army in 1914 could have been easily hidden from the general public by Soviet propaganda. Unlike Nicholas II, Stalin did not have a parliamentary farce in the capital, in which ignorant people would teach him what to do and morally condemn his real and imaginary miscalculations. Rumors and gossip in the military environment could also be easily suppressed by means of censorship and pressure from the political agencies. At the everyday level, people still understood that a preventive strike could be caused by military necessity. Despite the pause from the autumn of 1939 to the spring of 1941, "fascism" (the name of Nazism adopted in the USSR) was quite successfully positioned as an absolute evil. A preventive strike against such an enemy would undoubtedly be received favorably by the population of the USSR as a whole. Against the background of reports in an even voice by Levitan about the battles in the area of Lomza, Przemysl, Ato and Sedlec, the decision of the leadership to strike first would have

community support. In the USSR, they felt the approach of the war, although its beginning was unpleasant news, but, by and large, it did not surprise anyone and did not strike like a bolt from the blue. The first shots quickly divide the world into friends and foes. The words of the famous song "Kyiv was bombed" will certainly remain in their place even in the case of "we start first". And Minsk, and Kyiv, and many other cities on

will surely be subjected to German aerial bombardment, regardless of who initiates the war. Destroyed buildings, killed civilians will cry out for revenge. In a word, on the domestic political front, the first blow would also be received more favorably than unambiguously negatively.

"THE DISASTER COULD HAPPEN..."

If the situation is practically obvious with regard to political consequences and prospects, then assessing the capabilities of the Red Army in the "first strike" is a much more complicated matter. The failures of the summer of 1941 are a rather serious argument against the possibility of the Soviet troops successfully conducting offensive operations against the German army. In essence, when we talk about the possible outcome of the battle between the fully deployed and mobilized Red Army and the Wehrmacht, we must rank the causes of defeat in the real year of 1941. What was the main one in the long list of causes of failure? Preemption in deployment and mobilization? Low professional qualities of the command staff? Unsatisfactory tactical training of fighters and junior commanders? Mediocre characteristics of military equipment?

As many probably already know, I am of the opinion that the strategic reasons for the failures of 1941 predominate. In my opinion, in its significance and weight, the factor "preemption in mobilization and deployment" far exceeds everything else. Moreover, the point is not only in the immediate consequences of preempting the Red Army by the Wehrmacht, but also in the long-term consequences of this event. The defeat of the armies of the special districts worsened the conditions for the entry into battle for the rest of the formations and associations of the Red Army. The correlation of forces in which the armies from the internal districts entered the battle was obviously worse than in the absence of the defeat of many divisions and corps in the Battle of the Border.

Accordingly, after the defeat of the armies of the internal districts, the new formations again entered the battle in a worse balance of forces with the Germans than in the absence of a defeat (and exclusion from the combat strength of the Red Army) of their predecessors. Therefore, the factor "preemption in deployment" turns out to be very significant and "long-playing". In fact, the entire summer-autumn campaign of 1941 was for the Red Army overcoming the sad consequences of preemption in mobilization and deployment.

However, it would be an unforgivable mistake to equate to zero the significance and weight of all other factors in the defeat of the Soviet troops. Serious problems with combat training and the lack of full-fledged mechanized formations also played a role. Insufficient experience of Soviet commanders and commanders will also influence the outcome of many battles. Of course, in the "Red Army Begins" option, all these factors will remain and will influence the development of events. The question is, how strong will this influence be? Will it lead or not to the defeat of the Soviet troops in the first operation?

I must say that we are somewhat lucky. Regarding the prospects for such a battle, there is an opinion, of course, of an authoritative person - Marshal G.K. Zhukov. Moreover, he even spoke on this topic twice. For the first time, this was a review of Vasilevsky's article, which was not published during Georgy Konstantinovich's lifetime. In it, Zhukov formulated his idea as follows:

"I think that the Soviet Union would be defeated if we deployed all our forces on the border ... It's good that this didn't happen, but if our main forces were defeated in the state border area, then Hitler's troops would have been able to more successfully wage war, and Moscow and Leningrad would have been occupied in 1941.

The wording, it must be said, is extremely rigid. However, it should be noted that the main forces of Kras

10

Noah Army was already defeated in the first weeks of the war. This happened, however, sequentially, in the Battle of the Border and in the battles at the turn of the Western Dvina and the Dnieper. Zhukov knew this very well.

After some time, he again spoke on the same topic in a conversation with historian V.A. I melt: it's good that he didn't agree with us then. Otherwise, given the state of our troops, a much larger catastrophe could have occurred than the one that befell our troops in May 1942 near Kharkov.

Usually these two phrases of Zhukov are waved as an assessment of the ability of the Red Army to resist the Wehrmacht even in the most favorable conditions for it. Terrible words are heard: "Here is the answer to those who now believe that if the Red Army had attacked first in 1941, it would have shown the Reich" Kuzkin's mother "...". In fact, this is a continuation of the dispute about the role of various factors in the defeat of the Red Army. Based on the words of Zhukov, the thesis is put forward about the dominance of such a factor as the combat training of troops and staffs in the tragedy of 1941.

However, are the assessments of the Soviet military commander so obvious and unambiguous? I must say that Georgy Konstantinovich was not a stupid person, and in places even sarcastic. In those cases when he could not, for reasons of censorship, speak out directly, he quite successfully used Aesopian language, understandable to the initiates. A person familiar with the statistics of the war will immediately catch the eye of a comparison with Kharkov in 1942. Actually, the catastrophe of the Southwestern Front mentioned by Zhukov was far from the largest defeat of the Soviet troops. The Kiev "cauldron", the defeat near Vyazma and Bryansk at the initial stage of the battle for Moscow leave the Kharkov failure far behind. Then, in May 1942, 250,000 people were surrounded. Near Kiev, the Germans surrounded more than 500 thousand people, the encirclement of three fronts in October 1941

eleven

to almost 600 thousand people. Kharkov quite confidently occupies an intermediate position between the defeat of one or two armies (Uman, Melitopol, Bialystok, Smolensk) and the encirclement of entire fronts at once.

This means that Zhukov's two statements are by no means equivalent to each other. In the first case, the assessments are extremely harsh and the prospects are gloomy; in the second case, Zhukov is quite optimistic about the scale of a possible catastrophe. This leads to the conclusion that Georgy Konstantinovich corrected his opinion and significantly softened his assessment of the situation. From "Moscow and Leningrad would be busy" he came to a comparison with Kharkov in May 1942. Another interpretation of the marshal's words can also be offered. As is known, "permanent mobilization", that is, the formation of new formations contrary to MP-41, made it possible to survive in 1941. In the event of a war with the main forces of the Red Army on the border, the decision on new formations could be made late, or even not taken at all. This could lead to sad consequences. However, most likely, Zhukov simply changed his mind and softened his assessment of the situation.

One way or another, we have only the most general assessment of the prospects for the first operation of the war without preempting the Red Army in mobilization and deployment. What can be said about the course of hostilities? A well-known English publicist assessed the prospects for the Soviet offensive as rosy and even brilliant. He wrote about the "War that never happened" as follows: "In August 1941, the Second Strategic Echelon completed the Vistula-Oder operation, capturing bridges and bridgeheads on the Oder. From there, a new operation was launched to a great depth. That is, according to his calculations, from July 6 to August 1941, the entire territory from the new border to the Vistula would have been passed with the capture of bridgeheads, and in August the success of the real January 1945 would have been repeated.

One thing is certain: the projection on the "alternative 1941" such brilliant opera

12

tions of a real war, like the Vistula-Oder, Lvov-Sandomierz, Iasi-Kishinev and Bagration, is completely unfounded. The situation on the ground and in the air during these undoubtedly successful operations was fundamentally different from that which could have arisen in the alternative 1941 without preemption in mobilization and deployment. It's not even about the obvious particulars, for example, in the dispatch in real December 1944 [At the SS Panzer Corps to Hungary. In the alternative 1941, such a decision is unlikely to be made. Just because there will simply be no time to break through to Budapest. In reality, they went to him throughout the autumn of 1944 and even most of December 1944. In the alternative "The Red Army strikes first", the Berlin-Warsaw direction will be the main one for the Germans from the very beginning, its weakening seems extremely unlikely.

What are the prospects for the Red Army's offensive to the west under such conditions? First of all, it is necessary to pay attention to the general balance of forces of the opponents on the Eastern Front. During the victories of the Red Army in 1944-1945. it was different than the possible correlation of forces during the hypothetical "first strike". So, on | June 1944, Germany had 2.62 million people in the active army on the Eastern Front against 6.7 million people in the Soviet active fronts and separate armies. Sometimes even smaller numbers are called. According to Müller-Hillebrand, as of July 1, 1944, there were 2.16 million people in the active army in the east, including Luftwaffe field units and SS troops. This was a rather low figure. For comparison: on July 1, 1943, there were 3.14 million people in the east, on June 22, 1941 - 3.3 million people, not counting the Luftwaffe. Accordingly, in the summer of 1943, 6.8 million people opposed the German troops as part of active fronts and individual armies. It is not surprising that in the summer of 1944 the Red Army advanced quickly and successfully, and in the summer of 1943 the offensive proceeded with great difficulty and considerable

13

losses, and in some areas (Mginsk operations near Leningrad, Izyum-Barvenkovskaya operation and the offensive of the Mius Front in July 1943) turned out to be completely unsuccessful. In a word, it would be strange to think that the victories of 1944-1945. did not rely on the heavy fighting of 1942-1943. They were trained in those battles, the defeat of Army Group Center was not least the result of the removal of chips from it in the previous years of the war.

Of course, in the absence of preemption in mobilization and deployment, the strength of the active army of the Soviet Union will be different than in the real 1941. Therefore, to operate with the real balance of forces in the summer of 1941 in assessing the possible development of events according to the "hit first" scenario would be a grave mistake. The mobilized and deployed Red Army will be able to put forward much more impressive forces against the Wehrmacht than the weak armies of covering special districts. According to the February 1941 mobilization plan (also known as MP-41), the total strength of the Red Army, not counting the formations of civilian people's commissariats, was to be 8,682,827 people. military personnel and 18,880 people. freelance. This is very close to 9 million of the total strength of the Red Army by the summer of 1944. If the 9 million army of 1944 sent 6.7 million people to the front, then the 8.7 million army, raised by MP- 41, should put at least 6.5 million people on the front. This leads us to a realistic assessment of the overall balance of power for the "hit first" scenario. Most likely, it will be 6.5 million people from the Soviet side and 3.3 million people from Germany.

Allies of Germany in these calculations, we note, are not taken into account. However, the use of allied troops is unlikely to be higher than the real level of 1941 and the real 1944. I propose deliberately putting this component out of the brackets. The so-called Antonescu group in June 1941 consisted of 326 thousand people. In the summer of 1944, Romania reached its maximum mobilization

th tension, over 1 million people were put under arms. At the same time, the morale of the Romanians after Stalingrad and the debacle in the Crimea in May 1944 was much lower than in 1941, which offset the increase in numbers. The Hungarian army grew noticeably from several brigades in 1941. Nevertheless, we do not have a qualitative change in the situation, taking into account the allied troops will give.

From this point of view, the correlation of forces in the estimated year 1941 (without preemption in mobilization and deployment) will be very far from the real June 1944. One can even say more: even July 1943 will be left behind with its difficult overcoming "Citadels. Unfortunately, the balance of forces of the parties will be even worse for the USSR than in the summer of 1942. At that time, 2.85 million people in the German army in the east opposed 5.7 million people in the active fronts and individual armies of the Soviet Union. As you know, with such a balance of forces, the Germans were able to bring down the entire southern sector of the Soviet-German front, reach the Volga and the Caucasus. With a similar balance of forces, it is obviously not necessary to expect the rapid conduct of the Vistula-Oder operation by the forces of KV-2 and T-34 with L-11. Of course, the Red Army in the summer of 1942 suffered from a shortage of weapons and ammunition due to the evacuation of industry. However, the Wehrmacht was already pretty battered by the winter campaign of 1941/42. In addition, most of the Luftwaffe fighter aircraft were already in the West. In July 1942, 29 German fighter groups were in the West and the Mediterranean, 20 on the Eastern Front and 4 in Norway.

Here, remembering aviation, we smoothly move from the general balance of forces to particulars. Another fundamental difference between the real June 1944 and January 1945 from the calculated "first strike" summer of 1941 will be the balance of forces in the air. Moreover, both at the quantitative and qualitative levels. On May 31, 1944, out of 4,475 Luftwaffe aircraft on the Eastern Front, there were 1,693 aircraft in the 1st and 4th air fleets (317, 688 and 688 aircraft, respectively).

fleets). Less than half of the total strength of the German Air Force, as we see. Another 193 aircraft were in the 5th air fleet in Finland and Norway, operating in the east and west at the same time. The most numerous was the air fleet "Reich", responsible for the air defense of Germany - 1348 aircraft. Of the 1051 single-engine fighters in the Luftwaffe as a whole, there were 444 in the Reich air fleet, in the 6th air fleet, in the central sector of the Soviet German front, only 66. In words: sixty-six. By the beginning of "Bagration" this number even decreased and fell to 40 cars. Whether we like it or not, the air offensive of the Anglo-American Air Force drew off significant forces from the Eastern Front. In the event of a "first strike" in 1941, there would, of course, be no such severe air pressure in the west. The Luftwaffe will be able to concentrate all its forces without much damage to fight for the sky in the east. On June 21, 1941, the Luftwaffe had 4,882 combat aircraft, including 1,440 single-engine fighters. It is not difficult to guess which air fleet will be the most numerous in the event of a "first strike". It will be one of the air fleets on the Eastern Front, most likely in the direction of the main attack of the Red Army - in Ukraine (more precisely, in southern Poland). The aviation of the Southwestern Front will be opposed by no means by 40 fighters, like the three fronts in Bagration, but by a much larger number of them.

From the position of the Red Army Air Force, the situation also does not look brilliant. There were still more combat aircraft in the Soviet Air Force in 1944 than in June 1941. In addition, in 1944 aviation was united into air armies, which made it possible to use it more flexibly and efficiently. On June 22, 1941, front-line aviation, intended for joint operations with ground forces, was represented by front-line, army and military aviation proper. In the modern understanding of this term, "front-line aviation" includes all three groups. Therefore, it is more expedient to call front-line aviation in 1941 a front-line group

aviation. Army aviation as part of mixed aviation divisions was directly subordinate to the armies, more precisely, to the commanders of the air forces of the combined arms armies. The front aviation group, which consisted of fighter and bomber aviation divisions, was subordinate to the front command. The military aviation consists of corrective squadrons and communications squadrons on U-2 aircraft.

Such a scheme actually scattered the forces of the Air Force of the front, spreading half of the combat aircraft over the armies. The front command did not have the opportunity to mass the Air Force in their hands in the most important direction. The aviation of the army, in the zone of which these events took place, and the aviation of the front could take part in repulsing the enemy strike or in the offensive. At the same time, in the calmer sectors of the front, aviation subordinate to the armies was inactive or was engaged in solving minor tasks. This was abandoned only in May 1942, when the air armies were created. They united all air divisions of the front into one organizational structure and made it easier for aviation to maneuver both in the offensive and in defense. The command of the front, through the headquarters of the air army, could mass the efforts of aviation in a key direction. It also improved the quality of aviation control. By no means all the combined-arms commanders were competent enough to correctly set the tasks of the Air Force. Army aviation in real 1941 did not always use its potential precisely for this reason.

The development of events in the air over the "first strike" in the light of the foregoing is not difficult to predict. The first blow is likely to be quite effective. For a while, Soviet pilots will even dominate the air. However, this successful debut is unlikely to last indefinitely. The successful offensive of the Red Army troops in one direction or another, like a magnet, will attract groups, and even entire squadrons of German fighters. Operating in

In the interests of the advancing mechanized and rifle corps, Soviet bombers and attack aircraft will meet dense groups of German fighters. Actually, the scenario of attacks on the "mechanized columns" of the summer of 1941 will be repeated, only in a slightly corrected form. The arena of fierce air battles will be the key points of the Soviet offensive.

The specifics of the organizational structure of the SC Air Force will play a negative role here. The aviation of the armies in the direction of the main attack will be quickly crushed in such battles. Strengthen the weakened army. air division, the front command will, strictly speaking, have nothing. At the same time, the advancing mechanized corps will be subjected to fierce bombardments. Generally speaking, here I do not even calculate some hypothetical development of events, but describe in general terms their real course in some Soviet operations in 1942-1943. In the same way that massive bombardments stopped the counterattacks of the mechanized corps in the real year 1941, as well as 1942 and 1943, they will stop the advance of the "first strike" mechanized corps in the depths of the German defenses.

If in the summer of 1943 German aviation stopped the offensive of the 1st Panzer Corps near Orel, then what prevents it from stopping the mechanized corps in a "first strike"? We also note that in 1941, Soviet light tanks were still much more vulnerable to air strikes than in the summer of 1943. The Soviet tank commanders who participated in the counterattack near Lepel in July 1941 almost unanimously say about high losses from aviation.

From a tactical point of view, the situation will be practically the same as the counterattacks of the real 1941. The advancing Soviet mechanized corps will be met by the hastily built defense of the German reserve somewhere in the depths of the defense. Aviation will prevent the defense of these reserves from breaking down. Which will clear the air from the Soviet MiGs and SBs, as well as strike at the combat formations of the mechanized corps. It will be a repeat of the attacks of the 6th

mechanized corps near Grodno on June 25 or the 8th mechanized corps near Berestechko on June 26, 1941. In both these cases, Soviet tank units were forced to withdraw by powerful air strikes.

However, this comparison of the forces of the parties can be completed for the time being. The overall balance of forces on the ground and in the air is certainly important, but in the initial period of the war, it has its own specifics. There is no war yet, the parties are only just deploying their armed forces on the common border. In real 1941, we were ahead of the mobilization and deployment. Considering alternative options, it is necessary, first of all, to determine the position in which Germany and its Armed Forces will find themselves. It may well turn out to be pre-emptive in deployment. In this case, the correlation of forces in the border battle may turn out to be much more favorable for the Red Army than calculated above, based on the actual number of MP-41s. A lot depends on the "degree" of the lead, that is, on what stage of its deployment the German army will come under attack from the Soviet troops. The above correlation of forces is the number of troops that the parties can put on the common border in the best way for themselves. In other words, this is the number of troops on the common border if both the Wehrmacht and the Red Army have time to complete their deployment. This option also cannot be ruled out, although it seems far from the most probable.

From the point of view of the balance of power, the best option seems to be when Hitler completely refuses to hold Barbarossa in 1941. For example, having received new intelligence about the size of the Soviet armed forces, the number of tanks and aircraft in the Red Army. These data could force us to revise the order of forces for the operation to reach the Arkhangelsk-Astrakhan line. Accordingly, the signing of Directive No. 21 in December 1940 could

not take place.

Theoretically, in this case, by June 1941, the grouping of troops on the border with the USSR could have remained unchanged as of the beginning of the year. This, let me remind you, is only 26 divisions. In this case, the Wehrmacht in the "General-Government" (occupied Poland) could expect a truly epic defeat in the style of the Vistula-Oder operation of January 1945. These 26 would have been simply swept away by the Soviet strike.

However, the shift of "Barbarossa" to 1942, in view of the awareness of the military power of the Soviet Union, most likely would have led to the build-up of the group in the east for defensive purposes. There is no hope for 26 divisions. The Red Army would have been met by a developed system of engineering obstacles, with 70-80 infantry divisions in a dense defense, with two or three motorized corps in the second echelon. Considering the problems with the interaction with the engineering units, demonstrated by the Red Army in Finland, chewing through such a defense could become a rather long matter. This would give the Germans time to transfer reserves from the fatherland and from the west.

The most likely option is when the Soviet strike will catch the German troops at one of the final stages of deployment for the Barbarossa. For example, if the Soviet leadership decides to start the process of mobilization and deployment, and the Wehrmacht is delayed by the Balkan campaign. In this case, the Red Army in the west will be opposed by 70 to 90 German infantry divisions. The main forces of the tank groups, included, as you know, in the last echelon to advance to the border with the USSR, will still be on their way.

"FIRST ROUND. BREAKING WITH FIRE, SHINING WITH THE SHINE OF STEEL ... "

So, suppose that at the beginning of June 1941, the Wehrmacht is ahead of its deployment. Tank groups are in the early stages of transportation to the

current. The mobile reserves of the three army groups are relatively few in number, and the main opponent of the Red Army, which has gone over to the offensive, is the infantry. German intelligence is unlikely to remain blind and deaf, especially in the last days of Soviet preparations. Therefore, it is unlikely that Soviet divisions will meet empty positions on the border. The formations prepared for Barbarossa will most likely be brought up to the border in the last days and hours and occupy the border fortifications.

However, the infantry units of the German army in 1941 were a tough nut to crack. These were still nine-battalion divisions, that is, out of nine battalions in three infantry regiments. The transition to the six-battalion infantry divisions characteristic of the Germans in the second half of the war (two battalions per regiment) was outlined in 1942 and finally took place in the second half of 1943. defense would not be so easy. This, most likely, will succeed the Red Army only in the areas where there is a general double or triple numerical superiority over the enemy, with an impressive advantage in the direction of the main attack. The Red Army had such superiority in Ukraine, on the Southwestern Front.

The purpose of the troops of the South-Western Front, which went on the offensive, was the classic "cannes" for the German troops in southern Poland. The 5th army of General Potapov from the Kovel region hit Lublin from the east. Her success development echelon was two mechanized corps: the 22nd Kondrusev and the 9th Rokossovsky. They were mostly light tanks, only in the 2nd mechanized corps there were 31 clumsy KV-2s. The 6th Army of General Muzychenko launched an offensive against Lublin from the northern front of the Lvov ledge. Its tank fist was much more powerful: the 4th and 15th mechanized corps of Generals Vlasov and Karpezo with hundreds of new tanks. They suffered the first losses already during the breakthrough of the enemy

21

defense - tank units had to be brought into battle, and not into a clean breakthrough. However, having escaped into the operational space, the mechanized corps of Vlasov and Karpezo confidently moved forward towards Lublin. It seemed that only a few hours remained before the closing of the encirclement ring. The Cannes center was formed by Kurochkin's 20th Army. The turn to Lublin opened the left flank of two Soviet mechanized corps. However, this was according to the plan. From the "top" of the Lvov ledge through Przemyśl to Tarnobrzeg and further to the Vistula, the troops of Kostenko's 26th army broke through. Its main striking force was General Ryabyshev's 8th mechanized corps. Behind him was the 16th mechanized corps of divisional commander Sokolov. Under their blows, the German units retreated further to the west, to the Vistula. Thus, the threat to the flanks of the 4th and 15th mechanized corps moved further to the west. At first, the mood in the units was upbeat. However, as we moved towards Lublin, the new KV and T-34 more and more often remained on the side of the road. Clutches burned, gearboxes broke down, engines failed. Also, planes with crosses on their wings began to appear more and more often over the convoys of trucks. At first, their attacks were successfully repulsed by the sharp-nosed MiGs [5th Air Division. But there were more and more planes with crosses, and fewer and fewer red star fighters. "Junkers" and "Heinkels" increasingly attacked columns with fuel and ammunition. Not infrequently, German bombers appeared over the battlefield, dropping a hail of bombs on artillery positions and even attacking tanks and infantry. |

What countermeasures can be expected from the German command? The history of the war provides us with extensive material for constructing a possible strategy and tactics of the Wehrmacht in a hypothetical defensive battle in the summer of 1941. A typical method of the German army in such operations was to pull large air forces to a dangerous direction. Moreover, most often it was aviation that arrived at the battlefield first and delivered the first blows to the advancing

Soviet

22

parts. The Luftwaffe had a fairly flexible structure in the form of air fleets and air corps. Also, the German commanders did not hesitate to split up even such structures as

bomber and fighter squadrons in groups (approximately 40 aircraft each). One group could defend the Reich in air defense, another could operate near Leningrad, and a third — near Kursk.

Aviation of the Southwestern Front in June 1941 had about 2,000 aircraft in 46 air regiments. Fighter aviation consisted of 1166 combat vehicles (159 MiG-3, 64 Yak-1, 450 I-16, 493 I-153). As we see; fighters of new types were a minority, 20% of the total number. However, one should not think that in the "Red Army strikes first" variant this grouping will be unchanged. According to the "Considerations ..." of May 15, 1941, Zhukov with a broad gesture signed off 91 aviation regiments to the southwestern direction. Of course, it must be taken into account that this detachment of forces includes the strip of the Odessa district, later given to the Southern Front. Nevertheless, the Southwestern Front had to go into battle not with 46 aviation regiments, but with a few more of them. It was supposed to build up the grouping of the aviation of the front at the expense of the aviation of the internal districts. Together with the armies of the internal districts, their aviation also arrived in the regular version. As of June 1, 1941, the internal districts (ArkVO, MVO, PriVO, OrVO, KhVO, SKVO, UrVO and SibVO) had 1856 combat aircraft, including 1613 serviceable ones. New fighters were only in the Moscow District, 67 MiG-3 and 69 Yak-1. For obvious reasons, new vehicles were primarily used to equip border districts. So, a noticeable qualitative increase in the fleet of fighters is not to be expected, only a quantitative one. However, the mobilized and deployed Southwestern Front will go into battle with at least 2,500-2,700 aircraft.

However, the enemy Air Force grouping will not remain unchanged either. In real June 1941, Ukraine was not the point of application of the main efforts for the Germans.

23

As of June 21, 1941, only one squadron of single-engine fighters operated against the Air Force of the Southwestern Front - the OZ with 109 combat-ready aircraft in three groups. In total, the 4th Air Fleet in the southern sector of the Soviet-German front had about 600 aircraft. If the Germans have to react to a Soviet strike, then much larger forces will be thrown into southern Poland. Most likely, Wolfram von Richthofen's air corps, which in real 1941 operated as part of the 2nd Air Fleet in Belarus, will be redirected to the south. In addition to strike "things", it also included single-engine fighters in the amount of three groups (123 $\ddot{y}\ddot{y}\ddot{y}9\ddot{y}/\ddot{y}$). Surely the matter will not be limited to this, and several more groups of Messerschmitts will be sent to reinforce the 4th Air Fleet.

It will not be a big exaggeration to say that the German command will confidently gather a fist of 1,400-1,600 aircraft of all types against the aviation of the advancing Southwestern Front (not counting the aviation in Rumania). The ratio of forces of 2500-2700 Soviet aircraft against 1400-1600 German aircraft does not at all promise brilliant prospects in air battles for "Stalin's falcons". The 4th Air Fleet will have about three to four hundred Me-109s, mostly VPO9E. This is a lot, especially taking into account the high intensity of the use of their aircraft by the Germans, up to six sorties per day. Even if we assume that the aircraft of the 4th Air Fleet will fly only twice as often, the number of sorties of German aircraft will be greater than that of the South-West Fleet Air Force. Accordingly, there will be a greater impact on the operational environment.

There are enough examples in the history of war for analogy. For example, in the operation "Citadel" on the northern and southern faces of the Kursk Bulge in July 1943, the Germans involved 339 single-engine fighters. As is well known, they created serious problems for the three Soviet air armies, and there was no talk of gaining air supremacy at that time. At the same time, in July 1943, the SC Air Force no longer had such a serious technical

24

lagging behind, as in 1941. In addition, part of the aviation of the South-West Front in the midst of the fighting will remain a dead weight in the air divisions of the armies in auxiliary directions. So a fist of three hundred and four hundred German fighters is more than enough to defeat the air "umbrella" over the mechanized corps of the Southwestern Front in southern Poland.

The situation in the air over the mechanized corps that had rushed forward would have a negative effect on the need to advance the airfield facilities in the wake of the troops that had gone ahead. There were serious problems with this even in the successful year of 1945. The Soviet units that broke forward at the end of the Vistula-Oder operation even talked about German air supremacy. And this is the end of January - the beginning of February 1945. However, in the same way, the Luftwaffe did not always keep up with the advancing motorized corps. In a word, the mech corps expects a hail of air strikes, slowing down their advance.

Of course, aviation will not be the only argument of the German High Command. Against the successfully advancing southwestern front, the motorized corps of two tank groups at once, the 1st TGr Kleist and the 2nd TGr Guderian, would have been deployed for sure. These are six motorized corps, about 1800 tanks and self-propelled guns. However, tanks were not the only means of combat within tank groups. In addition to tanks, they could boast of numerous motorized artillery, up to the heaviest. They also had a very impressive total number - 160-180 thousand people each. For comparison: the Soviet mechanized corps, even in the state, consisted of only 30 thousand people. Therefore, the superiority of the mechanized corps in the number of tanks was, perhaps, their only advantage.

The clash with the fresh forces of the Germans happened unexpectedly. The reconnaissance aviation of the Southwestern Front consisted of only two reconnaissance aircraft.

25

regiments. They could not effectively cover the situation. In addition, in the first days of the fighting, they suffered heavy losses from enemy fighters. Therefore, the mechanized corps moved forward almost blindly. The mechanized corps of Potapov's 5th Army, which had rushed forward, met stubborn resistance. They ran into German tank units. The tank battle turned into a real beating of the T-26 and BT. The next move was a powerful counter-attack to the flank. The 1st anti-tank brigade of Moskalenko held back the first blow of the Panzers. Soviet gunners found a white letter "b" on the wrecked tanks. The prisoners said that it means "Guderian" - that was the name of the commander of their tank group. Soon, dive bombers attacked the positions of the anti-tank brigade. They smashed bulky anti-aircraft guns, burned tractors and cars. The anti-tank brigade faltered, and the German tanks went to the road along which the Kondrusev and Rokossovsky mechanized corps were supplied. The remnants of the mechanized corps had to withdraw to the east.

Rokossovsky subsequently wrote in his memoirs:

"...the command post of our corps arrived on foot the commander of the tank division of the 22nd MK, as far as my memory serves me, Major General Semenchenko in a very upset state, with a bandaged right hand. He reported that his division was completely defeated. He managed to escape, but, firing from a revolver, he was overtaken by a German tank. He managed to dodge, fell, while his hand fell under the caterpillar of the tank.

Soon one of the commissars of the regiment of the same corps turned up here, who reported the death of General Kondrusev and that their corps was defeated. The decadent tone and confusion of the division commander and commissar of the regiment forced me to quite impressively advise them to immediately stop ranting about the death of the corps, start searching for their units and join them!

| A fragment from Rokossovsky's real memoirs is given with abbreviations.

26

The plan to encircle the main forces of the German 6th Army with strikes in converging directions on Lublin began to crumble.

Meanwhile, the advance to Lublin of the 6th Army slowed down. The German infantry divisions deployed by rail took up defensive positions on a broad front and, with air support, held back the onslaught of the Soviet mechanized corps. They were forced to stop to wait for the approach of infantry formations. However, the second attack on Lublin did not take place. Aviation reconnaissance warned of the concentration of large enemy tanks on the flanks, but it was too late. Powerful blows to the base of the wedge driven by Muzychenko's army into the formation of the Army Group "South" quickly created a crisis situation. The first reaction of the Soviet command was the advancement of anti-tank brigades to the breakthrough areas. But this measure was already too late, the brigades equipped with STZ-5 tractors simply did not make it in time. On a clear summer day, German tanks with the letters "K" and "O" on their armor met. Their meeting led to the cutting off and encirclement of both mechanized corps and two rifle corps of the 6th Army. Vashugin, a member of the Military Council of the Southwestern Front, who had left for the advanced units, was also surrounded.

The command of the Southwestern Front was forced to take urgent countermeasures. However, the deblocking strikes of the 8th mechanized corps, withdrawn from the attack on Tarnov, did not give any result. Moreover, part of the forces of the Ryabyshev corps itself was surrounded. The supply by air could not provide for the almost 100,000-strong grouping that ended up in the "boiler". Under these conditions, it was necessary to give the encircled troops an order to break through. The leaders of the breakthrough were the remnants of two mechanized corps. They managed to briefly break through the corridor to their own, through which some of the encircled formations came out. The encircled mechanized corps were forced to destroy or simply abandon most of their equipment. Threatened with captivity, Commissar Vashugin shot himself.

After the liquidation of the "cauldron" near Lublin, two German tank groups went on the offensive against wasps.

27

tatkov of the 6th army, as well as the 26th and 21st armies. Another "cauldron" was formed by the blow of the 1st Panzer Group in the direction of the Carpathians. To release the blockade, the 16th Army and the 5th Mechanized Corps, which arrived from Transbaikalia, had to be brought into battle. However, all attempts to break through to the encircled units were unsuccessful. The 5th mechanized corps was replenished with T-34 and KV due to fresh production from factories, but the bulk of its equipment was made up of light tanks. All their attacks failed.

The retreat of the troops of the Southwestern Front stopped only at the line of the state border. The unfinished Molotov Line provided support for the retreating troops. The battered divisions became the field filling of the URs. Despite the losses and the encirclement, the filling density of the fortifications in the zone of the Southwestern Front was quite high. All German attacks on the Molotov line failed. The ball launchers of the Soviet pillboxes easily withstood attacks with the use of flamethrowers. The 76-mm L-17 casemate guns installed in pillboxes confidently hit German tanks. However, the crisis that arose was overcome, and there was an operational pause at the front.

While the cannonade was gradually subsiding at the front, gradually slipping into skirmishes flaring up here and there, thunders rumbled and lightning flashed in the headquarters. The commander of the Southwestern Front, General Kirponos, at the request of Mekhlis, who arrived at the place of the deceased Vashugin, was removed from command of the front and arrested. A trial soon followed, and the general was shot. Together with Kirponos, the commander of the 6th Army, Muzychenko, was arrested and put on trial. With great difficulty, Zhukov managed to defend the chief of staff of the front, Purkaev. Marshal Timoshenko became the new commander of the Southwestern Front.

Thus, Zhukov's assessment of the possibility of repeating Kharkov in May 1942 on an enlarged scale seems to be quite justified.

28

Noah. Most likely, it would not have been possible without the encirclement of the attack group advanced forward. Let us note, by the way, a very subtle hint made by Zhukov in a conversation with Anfilov. He did not use as an analogy the encirclement of the main forces of the Western Front in the area of Bialystok and Novogrudok. In terms of the number of those surrounded, it was quite comparable with the encirclement near Kharkov in May 1942. However, Zhukov chose Kharkov for comparison, pointing not only to a quantitative assessment of the scale of a possible catastrophe, but also to the direction where it would occur — the South Western front.

SECOND ROUND. SHADOW OF BARBAROSSA

A sharp taste of intrigue in the subsequent events is added by the fact that both opponents will leave the border battle dissatisfied with themselves. Moreover, both for the Red Army and for the Wehrmacht, the enemy's resistance force will become a cold shower. The "colossus with feet of clay", as the Germans imagined it, suddenly turned out to be capable of strong and energetic blows. On the other side of the front, the effectiveness of enemy aviation and the rapid grinding of mechanized corps by the German defense and counterattacks will be a surprise. If the moderate effectiveness of the Red Army infantry had already become obvious to the Soviet leadership during the Finnish campaign, then the opposition of the Finnish Air Force was weak. On the contrary, in a clash with Germany, the Soviet Air Force and ground forces will be exposed to the blows of a numerous and well-prepared enemy.

What will be the basis for the continuation of the fighting? On the one hand, both armies will obviously not achieve a decisive result, on the other hand, they will still have the strength to continue the struggle in the summer campaign of 1941. The mobilized armies of the parties, who entered the battle with formations in wartime states, have a high margin of safety. This is not 5-7 thousand. Soviet divisions

29

summer of 1943, rapidly losing their strike capabilities. The same can, however, be said about the six-battalion divisions of the Wehrmacht. Having entered the border battle with about 14,000 rifle divisions, the Red Army will retain sufficient offensive and defensive potential. In the same way, the enemy infantry divisions, which entered the battle in the number of about 16 thousand people, will retain the potential for defense and offensive. Therefore, the summer campaign of 1941 in the variant "The Red Army starts first" will obviously not end with the reflection of the Soviet offensive. At the same time, on the side of the Red Army there will be a front with normal densities and divisions in wartime states. On the side of the Wehrmacht, however, there will be an advantage in choosing the direction of the strike - clearly one cannot count on a quick resumption of the offensive after a chain of failures.

While the Southwestern Front was breaking through to Lublin, its northern neighbor was trying to break into the enemy defenses in the Warsaw direction. However, the Western Front did not succeed in this field. The 4th Army failed to crack the German defenses at the Bug line north of Brest. Several captured bridgeheads remained isolated islands, from which it was not possible to break through further to the West. Events on the right flank of the Western Front developed much more successfully for the Red Army. The joint efforts of the 3rd Army of the Western Front and the 11th Army of the North-Western Front managed to cut off the Suwalki ledge. Encirclement of large German forces did not happen, they promptly pulled their troops out of the ledge. However, against the general background of the failure to fulfill the plans for the first operation, this was an undoubted success.

Thanks to good luck near Suwalki, General Pavlov was not even removed from command of the front. One of the victors Suvalok, the commander of the 11th mechanized corps, Mostovenko, was appointed commander of the cavalry mechanized group from the 6th mechanized and 6th cavalry

thirty

Ryan corps. The commander of the 4th Army, Korobkov, was also removed from command, and another hero of the battle for Suwalki, General Kuznetsov, who had previously commanded the 3rd Army, took his place. In general, despite the modest results of the offensive, the Western Front

was in a better position. There were no large-scale maneuvering battles in its zone. Therefore, after the German counterattacks, hundreds of tanks of the Western Front did not stay forever in the fields and on the roadsides of the General Government. Cutting off the Suwalki ledge cost heavy losses, but the wrecked tanks eventually remained on the territory controlled by the Soviet troops. Most of the wrecked vehicles, especially new types, were safely evacuated from the battlefield. The only exceptions were the "bateshkas" that burned to the ground. During the operational pause, Pavlov made titanic efforts to restore the wrecked vehicles and to train crews in proper driving and tactical use of the T-34 and KV. Three weeks later, his cavalry-mechanized group was almost completely

regained strength.

However, the restoration of strength and preparation for new battles took place on the other side of the front. The German command decided to repeat Barbarossa in a slightly modified form. However, due to failures in the south, it was decided to abandon the offensive in Ukraine. Army Group "South" went over to a tough defense. Two tank groups were concentrated in the zone of the North-Western Front - the 3rd and 4th TGr. Guderian's 2nd Panzer Group was reinforced by XXXXIII motorized corps from Kleist's 1st Panzer Group and concentrated east of Warsaw. The destroyed German tanks remained on the territory controlled by the Wehrmacht, and their recovery proceeded quite quickly.

The regrouping also affected the air forces. Air formations operating on the Southwestern Front were transferred from the 4th Air Fleet to the 2nd Air Fleet. Now almost 1,500 German aircraft were mustered against the Western Front. Simultaneously by the Germans

31

the idea of attacking airfields, which was incorporated in Barbarossa, was revived. The data of the high-altitude scouts of the "Rovel team" were significantly refined and supplemented during the Battle of the Border. The basing system for the aviation of the Western Front was, on the whole, opened up. The secrecy of the first strike was facilitated by the advancement of airfields forward, closer to the border. This was done by the commander of the ZF Air Force Kopets based on the experience of Spain. In the Battle of the Border, the airfields of the Western Front were practically not subjected to air strikes. The main forces of the Luftwaffe were involved against the Southwestern Front and Soviet troops on the battlefield.

Oddly enough, but the Soviet command was shown a corner of the new plan. The attacks against the bridgeheads on the Bug involved dive bombers and tanks with white "O" letters on their armor. The blow to the bridgehead north of Brest was strong and unexpected. A quick breakthrough of German tanks following a flurry of bombs "pieces" to the crossings forced the evacuation of the bridgehead hastily. However, before the withdrawal, the Soviet units managed not only to fix the characteristic identification marks of enemy tanks, but also the soldiers' books of enemy tankers and infantrymen. This confirmed that the units entered into battle belonged to the same divisions that were recorded earlier in the zone of the South-Western Front. Pavlov argued that the appearance of tank formations that had previously operated against the neighboring front unequivocally testified in favor of the version of a change in enemy plans. However, the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command continued to believe that Ukraine would become the main goal of the next enemy offensive. Therefore, the battered divisions of Timoshenko's front were strengthened in the first place. Attacks against bridgeheads on the Western Front were considered a red herring.

A conveyor of German air strikes hit the airfields in the Bialystok ledge. The Air Force of the Western Front was not ready for such a development of events. The air defense of the airfields was weak, the planes were crowded. All this led to heavy losses at the airfields. The Luftwaffe in Belarus won, if not dominance,

32

then a tangible advantage in the air. Powerful strikes against the troops of the North-Western Front also became an unpleasant surprise. Two tank groups relatively quickly made their way through

through the defenses of the 8th and 11th armies and rushed to the Western Dvina and Minsk. In the Brest area, aviation and heavy artillery attacked the fortifications of the Molotov Line. The bug was overcome by underwater tanks. Under a flurry of blows, the defenses of the 4th Army, battered by unsuccessful offensive battles, faltered. Nevertheless, the army commander Kuznetsov firmly held command and control of the troops in his hands.

The front commander Pavlov, mindful of the attacks on the bridgeheads in the Brest region, deployed the cavalry mechanized group Mostovenko in this direction. It quite successfully held back the offensive of the 2nd Panzer Group along the Brest-Minsk highway. However, a deep detour of the troops of the Western Front from the north and the confident advance of enemy tanks towards Minsk forced them to think about a retreat. Pavlov insistently demanded several times that his troops be allowed to withdraw to the old Soviet-Polish border. Moscow is not such a retreat TORESH ordering to hold on at all costs.

But one should not think that the Headquarters completely ignored the threat of Belarus. From Ukraine, the transportation of armies in reserve began. However, the delay in the order to withdraw soon led to tragedy. Having failed to advance along the Minsk highway, Guderian deployed one of his corps from Slonim to the north, in the interfluvium of the Shara and Zelvyanka rivers in the direction of Lida. This quickly led to the interception of communications of the Soviet units located in the Bialystok salient. Pavlov immediately gave the order to withdraw. The troops of the 13th and 10th armies had to make their way to the east along the Neman. The retreating columns were subjected to continuous air strikes. The withdrawing units suffered heavy losses, the roadsides were densely littered with abandoned and burned vehicles.

The rapid development of events in Belarus forced the Stavka, instead of orders, "immediately restored

2 A. Isaev _ 33

to change the situation" — to give the order to withdraw troops to the old border. The remnants of the 13th and 10th armies that retreated from Bialystok took up positions in the Minsk UR. The 4th Army withdrew through Baranovichi to the Slutsk Ur. Her retreat was successfully covered by the mechanized cavalry group Mostovenko. The armies of the Western Front were reinforced by formations transferred from the Southwestern Front. German panzer divisions suffered significant losses. There was a pause at the front again. The headquarters of the Supreme High Command issued the first orders for the formation of new formations contrary to the pre-war mobilization plan.

BEST OPTION

An analysis of possible scenarios for the development of events inevitably makes us think about choosing the best option. It cannot be said that various "summer" variants, that is, alternatives tied to May-June-July 1941, inspire optimism. No, of course, they are not so bad, but still there is a worm of doubt: "Is it possible to achieve a better result?" If we formulate the desired answer in a general way, then it will sound something like this: the best option for us is the maximum possible preemption of Germany in deployment. This thesis quickly brings us to the winter of 1940/41, when Germany had only 26 divisions on the border with the USSR. Why not? The Red Army traditionally performed better in the winter than in the summer during the war. Major successes, such as the counter-offensives near Moscow and Stalingrad, the Korsun Shevchenkovsky "cauldron" and the Vistula-Oder operation, were carried out in the winter.

Imagine what could be the chain of decisions leading to this option. So, in the summer of 1940, after the defeat of France and the evacuation of the British expeditionary force from Dunkirk, Stalin decides to attack Germany first in the near future, that is, in the winter of 1940/41. The Soviet military plan, that is, the so-called "Considerations about

principles of strategic deployment", by the real September 1940 already existed. It has already been prepared by BM Shaposhnikov as applied to the new boundary profile. This plan was well suited to be put into action to solve the political task of attacking Germany.

Let's say the decision to attack is made. Molotov's trip to Berlin in November 1940 becomes the last probing of the political situation. Molotov, as you know, returned with nothing. After that, the countdown begins to the beginning of the Soviet offensive, scheduled for January 1941. The most difficult task is to mobilize the troops. The task is to some extent facilitated by the fact that in the summer of 1940 the Red Army reaches one of the maximum numbers in the period 1939-1941. As of June 1, the Red Army numbered 4 million people. If demobilization is not carried out after the sovietization of the Baltic States and Bessarabia and Bukovina, then a certain reserve for mobilization can be retained.

Conducting a general mobilization with bringing the number of the Red Army to 8.6 million people in the case of an operation against Germany only, by and large, is not required. It is quite enough to mobilize the western districts: ArchVO, LVO, PribOVO, ZapOVO, KOVO, OdVO, MVO, OrVO, KhVO, SKVO, PriVO, UrVO. Their number will be 6,503,223 people, with a total strength of the Red Army of about 8 million people. This will be quite enough for the first strike, and with the outbreak of hostilities it will be possible to openly declare mobilization. Mobilization before the first shots will be possible only in a hidden form, without its open announcement. Partially, it can be covered up by training camps held under the slogan of mastering the experience gained in the Finnish war.

One of the important advantages of the "winter" version is the reduced effect of the Luftwaffe. The real winter of 1944/45 was bad weather.

35

vein restrained the activity of Soviet aviation. Therefore, the offensive in East Prussia was not as successful as the "Bagration" - the defeat of the retreating German columns from the air did not happen. In the realities that the Red Army would have had to face in 1941, non-flying weather would have been more of an ally than an adversary. It would reduce the effect of air strikes on the advancing Soviet troops, and would also reduce the rate of knocking out SB and DB-3 in air battles.

Another important advantage of the offensive in January-February 1941 is the more balanced structure of the Soviet tank forces. The reorganization with the formation of 30 (29) mechanized corps began in the spring of 1941. Prior to that, there were nine mechanized corps and separate tank brigades that could be used to directly support the infantry. Such a structure was more viable and, in the absence of preemption in mobilization and deployment, would have ensured better survivability of tanks on the battlefield. Almost all T-26s would operate in infantry combat formations, increasing its penetration power. Accordingly, at least eight mechanized corps would already be well-equipped in peacetime to operate as independent formations.

Here is the time to ask the sacramental question: "But what about the T-34 and KV?" Indeed, by the beginning of 1941 there were few of them, and these were early-series machines affected by "childhood illnesses". The weather would they really not have done. The situation in real June 1941 was fundamentally better: there were already quite a lot of new tanks to influence the course of hostilities. It is really difficult to refuse such a trump card. Nevertheless, the winter version has enough advantages to sacrifice one and a half thousand new tanks.

A serious advantage of the winter offensive is the possibility of implementing called "se

36

right" option for strategic deployment. Let me remind you, he provided for the concentration of the main forces north of Brest and the Pripyat marshes. The authors of the Soviet "Considerations ..." rightly pointed out: "The defeat of the Germans in East Prussia and the capture of the latter are of exceptional economic and, above all, political significance for Germany, which will inevitably affect the entire future course of the struggle against Germany." Indeed, East Prussia was a hornet's nest, from which in the real 1941 the two most successful tank groups advanced. Therefore, the isolation of East Prussia with a quick blow really seriously changed the situation on the Soviet-German front. In addition, the "northern" option was faster; a group of troops was assembled for it faster due to the better development of the road network in the western direction.

In this case, a repetition (to some extent) of the Vistula-Oder and East-Prussian operations of 1945 is possible. After the first skirmish, there would be a traditional calm for the period of spring thaw. The next test of strength would follow at the beginning of the summer. Then one and a half thousand KV and T-34 would be needed.

In conclusion, I would like to say that the option "in 1941 we mobilize, deploy and strike first" seems to be much more advantageous than the real summer of 1941. The well-known today and even obvious shortcomings of the Red Army, of course, had to influence the course of hostilities. However, under conditions of normal troop formation density (close to the statutory ones) and timely mobilization of the army, the situation looks much better than the real summer of 1941. One should not expect great successes from the Red Army, but the territory would be saved, industry would be saved from evacuation, and the losses would be noticeably smaller.

Dmitry Khmel'nitsky is talking to Viktor Suvorov

IF STALIN ATTACKED FIRST ...

— Viktor, how, in your opinion, could the situation in Europe have developed if Stalin had been the first to strike at Germany in the summer of 1941?

answer is simple enough. Look, Hitler = Oh - and for him there was the most good

the most pleasant situation imaginable. The Red Army is fleeing, people don't want to fight... And yet this most favorable situation ended with Hitler's suicide and the defeat of Germany. Let's ask ourselves what would have happened if the situation had been less favorable for Hitler.

For Stalin, 1941 was the most catastrophic situation of all. And yet, having lost 85% of the military industry, having lost a regular army, Stalin still ended the war in Berlin, Königsberg, Vienna, Prague, Bucharest, Budapest, Port Arthur, Beijing, etc. Here is the answer to this question. I believe that my critics, who say that if Stalin had entered the war first in 1941, he would not have reached Berlin, are wrong. I don't understand this logic. If Stalin had not reached Berlin, then now we could argue whether he could have reached or not ... But he did. What is the point in this - to prove that although he reached Berlin, he would not have been able to reach if he had not been defeated in 1941? I mean, he got there. And once he smashed, but, in fact, he couldn't reach and smash ...

What would happen if he attacked first? There is evidence of the Germans on this score. For example, the pilot Rudel, who has committed the most combat in world history

38

sorties, indicates that after the German strike, all the roads leading to the border, in three or four rows, were clogged with tanks standing side by side and ready to attack Germany.

Precisely readiness for attack turned into unpreparedness for defense. Here is a Soviet mechanized corps standing on the road. What is a mechanized corps? This is a thousand tanks, a thousand motorcycles and 5-6 thousand cars. This is 50 thousand people. Ammunition, three rounds of ammunition, tanks of gasoline Everything is collected in a huge pile. It's very easy to get there with a bomb, you don't even have to aim.

According to Rudel, the first flight is at four in the morning. They took off, bombed - it is very easy to bomb, because the targets are motionless, the columns are back to back along the roads. They return while the planes are being refueled and new bombs are being hung on them, the pilots are lying on the grass, sleeping. Then they take off, bomb, return, take off, bomb... The last flight is at 10 pm, at three in the morning

rise and take off again.

And this man writes that if the Soviet troops that they bombed moved, if they crossed the border, it would be impossible to stop them.

Colonel General Halder, chief of staff of the German ground forces, says the same thing. Literally in the same words, regardless of Rudel. In a secret diary, not intended for publication, he writes that if the Red Army had struck first, the German army would not have been able to hold this offensive. This entry is dated June 1941.

In April 1942, Hitler said much the same thing. If we missed the offensive of the Red Army, then we would not be able to stop it. As you can see, the range of opinions is from a simple pilot to Hitler.

So, what would happen if the Red Army attacked first?

The fact is that the German troops, like the Soviet ones, were assembled by powerful groups. Warehouses nah

39

roamed the borders. Thousands of tons of ammunition, packed on vehicles, stood at the very border and waited for the order to cross it, as well as fuel tanks and colossal masses of troops.

Stalin had two strategic echelons, 17 armies in the first echelon and seven in the second. Both secretly advanced to the borders.

Hitler, having attacked unexpectedly, defeated the first strategic echelon, but a second one suddenly appeared behind him, the existence of which the German intelligence did not know.

The Germans also defeated the second strategic echelon, but while the first and second echelons were dying, Stalin managed to form a third strategic echelon and mobilize. And in Germany there was only one strategic echelon. And the mobilization was carried out. Everyone who could be mobilized was already at the borders. This is an ideal situation for an attack, but extremely unfavorable for a defense.

The tank corps strikes, breaks through 20 kilometers ahead, the enemy is no longer there. Turn left, right, meet with the same corps, which strikes in the neighboring direction - and you will have a Stalingrad encirclement somewhere in the Bialystok region.

Further. The Soviet plan was much better than the German one. Germany was much more vulnerable than the Soviet Union. Stalin has an immense territory, which is even theoretically impossible to capture. If the regime survives, it withdraws beyond the Volga. There, in Zhiguli, Kuibyshev, command posts were already ready. Hitler didn't even have a plan to cross the Volga. The "Barbarossa" plan provided for access to the Arkhangelsk-Astrakhan line, the A-A line.

And beyond the Volga are grain regions. Beyond the Volga, Stalin has Ural factories. And Uralmash, and artillery Motovilikha ...

40

- Hitler planned to drive Stalin beyond the Urals and that's all?

- No, he did not even plan to drive him beyond the Urals. He planned to go to the Volga. The Germans came out to Moscow on their last breath. And this is in conditions when the Red Army did not want fight...

- The Red Army was defeated and therefore did not want to fight?

- If Stalin had struck first, then everyone would have been for Stalin. The Red Army enters enemy territory, here you can take off your watch, steal a bicycle, and fall into a pub... The Red Army would have fought for Comrade Stalin very, very successfully. And as soon as Comrade Stalin got into an unpleasant situation, the collapse began. And everything crumbled. However, in this situation, Stalin ended the war in Berlin.

So, Hitler was initially in a much more vulnerable situation than Stalin. For example, he was dependent on the timber of Finland and Sweden. In Germany, a lot of coal was mined, but the sinking of mines at that time was impossible without wood, from which the fasteners were made.
mines.

It is impossible to fight without nickel. Nickel came from Finland. It is impossible to fight without iron ore. The ore came from Sweden. The supply of all these strategic raw materials was threatened by the Soviet Baltic Fleet. In the Baltic, Hitler did not have a large fleet, while Stalin had a colossal fleet - two battleships, cruisers, aviation, a bunch of submarines DOK ...

Stalin strikes the first blow, Germany loses supplies of nickel, timber and iron ore, after which the war continues for a very, very short time.

When the Germans attacked, they simply laid minefields in the Baltic Sea, and the Baltic Fleet was locked up.

Now the most important thing is that Germany was heavily dependent on Romanian oil. And to Ploiesti from Soviet poses

41

tsy - 180 kilometers. Nobody defended these deposits. That is, the strike of the Red Army in Romania would have been fatal for Hitler.

It turns out that Stalin, in fact, does not even need to fight with the entire German army, enough strikes on the flanks.

And here's the situation - your planes can't fly, your submarines remain at their bases, cruisers stay there, tanks have stopped... You can't fight without oil.

Go ahead. Two rivers flow from south to north - the Vistula and the Oder.

And in the foothills of the Carpathians, in the region of Lvov, a powerful grouping of Soviet troops was concentrated, the most powerful in the history of mankind. And if you strike from there to the west, followed by a turn to the north, then the following situation arises. From the south we are protected by the mountains of Czechoslovakia. We are protected on the right flank by the Vistula, on the left flank by the Oder. There is no one in this corridor between the Vistula and the Oder. And the Red Army, its best units are advancing towards the Baltic Sea. And the entire German army is located east of the Vistula, between the Soviet border and the Vistula. If the Soviet grouping had succeeded in delivering a blow, then the German army would have had to turn back and force the Vistula in its rear to repel this blow. For Germany, this situation did not bode well.

Stalin, number one, has an absolutely colossal territory, number two, immense resources. And number three (perhaps the most important) - Stalin had already entered into a secret alliance with America. And Britain, and so constantly persuaded, persuaded Stalin to attack Germany, even threatened and blackmailed him. Stalin surrounded himself in advance with strategic partners who were very unfavorable to the defeat of the Soviet Union and to whom the defeat of Germany was very advantageous. On the side of Stalin were the United States of America, Great Britain, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, India ... and if you want, the whole world. All the resources of the world.

42

In addition, all of Europe occupied by the Germans—France, Belgium, Holland, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Greece, Norway, and so on and so forth—was on Stalin's side. That is, Hitler was in a situation in which it was problematic, to put it mildly, to win.

What could Stalin's strategic plan look like? After all, his goal was not Germany as such, his goal was Europe...

- Yes, sure. In my latest book, I cite the opinion of the American Admiral Richardson that if the Soviet Union strikes first, then in a couple of months they will be on Gibraltar. And if Hitler strikes first, then he will get stuck in the vastness of Russia and it will take Stalin a very long time to knock him out of there. This is an absolutely incredible prediction of May 1941. It was like looking into the water.

— It is clear why the archives of the General Staff are even more secret than the archives of the KGB. There should be options for this particular plan, the maximum plan. How can one imagine the ultimate goals of Stalin's foreign policy in the late 1930s?

- The final goals are not a secret for anyone. Here is a 1991 coin in front of me. On one side is written "USSR" and "20 kopecks". And on the other side is the globe, on which the sickle and hammer are superimposed. Here is the ultimate goal that has never changed.

Specifically, it could look like this. We strike and crush Germany under us. Germany becomes communist. Communist Germany would be worse than Nazi Germany.

Let's remember January 1933. Hitler won. And immediately the number of stormtroopers on the streets increased 10 times. Everyone was wearing brown shirts. If the communists had won, the number of communists would have increased.

I was once invited to the Stasi headquarters in Berlin.

43

I spent the whole day there. I looked at how the Berlin State Security worked and was horrified. The fact is that they worked more efficiently than the Soviet punitive organs. The German order is worse than our slovenliness. Because even in our camps this slovenliness helped a person to survive. The Germans didn't have it.

So, the whole of Germany would then become the German Democratic Republic. With terrible state security, a very powerful military industry and a very powerful army. Then the rest of us would be drawn to us. Plus to minus changes instantly. Remember how in fascist Hungary after the war a tough totalitarian Soviet system was formed, with a strong army and a terrible punitive apparatus?

Germany, Hungary and the Soviet army with the NKVD could well have been the force that would have kept the rest of the Eastern European countries, such as Czechoslovakia.

And here we also have Yugoslav communist partisans. Yugoslavia would quickly become a powerful communist power. The Italian communists would have helped us, the French, and so on.

Europe would very quickly turn into a totalitarian continent. This was very well felt by George Orwell, who described our future in his brilliant novel 1984. Those nations that have not been ill with this disease believe that they have immunity. But no one is immune.

The same France in the days of the Jacobins was a terrible totalitarian state. And if the Red Army came there and again brought the virus of totalitarianism, then no one would resist him couldn't.

In Paris, a bronze sign hung on the building of the Gestapo stating that denunciations were not accepted. When the Germans got there, the French bombarded them with denunciations. Somewhere there were some partisans, but France lived a peaceful life. Such would it be under the Soviets.

In Spain, half of the country fought for totalitarian

44

rism in 1936-1938. If the Red Army came there, then all the unfinished communists would immediately come out of the underground and put on red ties.

"This is a picture of captured Europe. And how would the strategic situation develop in those two months that it would take Stalin to reach Gibraltar?

- In the event of an attack by the Red Army, the German army is paralyzed, without oil. And it is sandwiched between the Soviet border and the Vistula River. And the Red Army is on a victorious march, and no one can stop it. "Give Warsaw, give Berlin, we have already crashed into the Crimea ..."

Thousands of tanks rush into the German autobahns, stretch out into columns of incredible length, and these columns, unstoppable by anyone, go forward. This happened in January 1945.

I was taught tank tactics by Lieutenant Colonel Odínokov. He told how the First Guards Tank Army broke out onto the autobahns and pushed forward. And no one could stop her. In 1945 there was at least a Volkssturm of boys and old men, but in 1941 there was no Volkssturm.

Further. Airborne corps are thrown forward, seizing the bridges across the Rhine, and the Red Army is transported there. Somewhere there are skirmishes, some resistance, but it would look something like the "liberation campaign" of the Red Army in Poland in 1939. Something does not fit together, somewhere they stand without fuel, somewhere our defeated, but the general forward movement would be impossible to stop.

— What was the sequence of the capture of Europe supposed to look like?

— A blow is being struck from the Lvov region to the west, in the direction of Krakow, and then a turn to the north, in the interfluvium of the Oder and the Vistula. Then the mechanized corps deploy

45

Xia to the east and become a defense to the east on the banks of the Vistula. The German army is being beaten from all sides and driven into sacks. After a couple of months, the remnants are taken prisoner.

At the same time, a blow is struck to Romania, oil fields are seized. Then turn to the northwest towards Hungary, along the Danube, towards Vienna...

offensive into Bulgaria, which would have met the Red Army with unfurled colors, as happened in September 1944.

This would be followed by the commissioning of the second strategic echelon, staffed by hungry prisoners, ready to rob anyone. They are moving forward. Behind them is the third strategic echelon, three armies of the NKVD.

There would have been uprisings, they would have been crushed, but I think that by December 1941, continental Europe would somehow have been pacified.

— Including Spain? "Maybe yes, maybe no. Still, the Pyrenees must be crossed ...

- Let's play back a little. So they took Berlin. - Then a direct throw to France, and France meets with flowers. Next - a throw to the English Channel.

- Further blow to the north, to Scandinavia?

- I think that the 1941 campaign is Germany, France and Eastern Europe. This would have been enough for 1941. Further, Comrade Stalin should have stopped and caught his breath. And then, most likely, in Spain, the communists would raise an uprising, in Italy, too. And so on.

What about Scandinavia?

— The defeat of Finland was already possible in 1941. The Mannerheim Line was broken in 1940, but Stalin stopped. As if the bandits dug under

46

ground passage under the bank and stopped, waiting for Sunday, when employees go home. Finland was already disarmed from the point of view of defense, and at any moment it was possible to continue the offensive. Under favorable circumstances, the offensive would have developed further; under unfavorable circumstances, it would have been possible to stop and rest.

Then it would be possible to form German expeditionary units and send them to fight in Norway, Sweden, and so on. How Cubans were sent to fight in Angola.

— There was another strategic direction that was actively discussed before the German attack — Turkey, the straits.

- Yes, sure. From a strategic point of view, striking with spread fingers is very bad. But we see how in August 1941 Stalin, together with the British, occupied Iran. No one said a word to him, no one resisted. Turkey would become the same victim of Great Britain and the Soviet Union, they would divide it in half.

When Stalin arrived in 1943 for a conference in Tehran, someone from the Molotov team turned to the Shah of Iran in order to arrange a meeting with Stalin. Stalin gave this comrade a hat and turned to the Shah himself with something like this: "When would Your Majesty be able to receive me?" He was cunning, like a snake. Stalin not only had whips, he also had gingerbread. And with Turkey, something similar could also happen. We are occupying Turkey, but we respect all your traditions, and who is in charge here, and is it possible to visit him, bow with a bear skin and a barrel of honey ...

- Then a stalemate arises when Stalin goes to the English Channel.

"I don't think he'll get there. It was necessary to make a very powerful respite and digest Europe.

47

This python swallowed too big a boar. After that, it was possible to deal with the UK.

What else could be done was to liberate Africa and all the colonial peoples. This would be a powerful help in terms of raw materials. Some Uzbek regimes would emerge there with their kings, with hammers and sickles on red banners. There would be no problems at all - these were colonies.

But America remains. On the one hand, the United States was very heavily infected with communism. It was not in vain that Comrade McCarthy purged America of the Left very much.

Isolationism was also very strong. We have an ocean on one side, an ocean on the other, and burn everything with a clear flame.

Comrade Stalin also thought about America and very much. It had to be decomposed from the inside. Stalin could not have coped with the American economy. Orwell described the situation with three supercontinents that are endlessly at war with each other. Here is a stalemate.

"But the Americans would still have made an atomic bomb by the same 1945, neither earlier nor later. And then Stalin would have to be smoked out of Europe with her help. Moreover, England would continue to resist.

- In England, some leftist forces could well have won and bowed their heads before Comrade Stalin. They would say that now, the great Soviet Union defeated Hitler, and we are fighting against the Soviet Union, it's not good ... Especially if Stalin began to transport bananas from Africa there. Britain cannot live without coffee and bananas.

— It turns out that the version of the story that played out was still the best? Otherwise, there would have been immeasurably more victims?

- Yes, sure. I express a seditious thought -

48

Hitler still saved Europe with his attack. Soviet communism was much more dangerous, much more attractive than Nazism, because it was international. He absorbed all the dirty tricks of any country. There is, say, inflexible Finland, and in it is the scoundrel Kuusinen. Stalin's appointee. He would have recruited as many executioners as he needed. Any country would provide enough executioners, and they would serve Stalin faithfully.

Hitler was national, so his regime could not be attractive to others. Stalin was international, so he won ideologically, he won with propaganda.

Remember, the emblem of the SS were skulls. How stupid do you have to be to come up with something like that! Au NKVD - spikelets. And the sun rising on the sleeve.

— The paradox is that by the beginning of the World War, the Nazis did not have even a thousandth of the crimes that were on the account of Stalin and Soviet communism. Nazi propaganda was in an ideal position, it did not have to invent anything about the USSR, there was enough truth. Still, the Nazis lost. And Stalin, despite his monstrous reputation, won the propaganda war.

Yes, and still continues to win. And after 70 years, he lives and thrives.

Mikhail Baryatinsky

SMALL BLOOD, POWERFUL BLOW

History, as is well known, is the "public wench of world imperialism." And therefore, there is nothing surprising in the fact that historical facts have been, are and will be questioned very often. In fact, there is nothing reprehensible in this - after all, it is natural for a person to doubt. People who have no doubts are usually stupid by nature. However, any doubt has a limit, after which the banal distortion of historical facts begins, or, simply, the rewriting of history. The last occupation has always been very popular, but it has reached its peak in the last two decades both abroad and in our country. A new impetus to this process was given by the collapse of the socialist camp and the Soviet Union. The process of national self-identification, which captured the newly formed on the territory of the last state, brought individual political figures to the state of mental illness. From their point of view, the more absurd the interpretation of this or that event, the better. This fully applies to the history of the Second World War. The latest innovation in this regard is the accusations of unleashing a world conflict, put forward by the "brothers" - the Poles against the USSR. That's it, no more, no less. Soon they will agree that the Munich Pact was also signed under the control of the Soviet Union. Well, of course, after all, both Chamberlain and Daladier, and Hitler himself were full-time employees of the NKVD! And, as usual, the loudest shout "stop the thief" those who have a stigma down. The role of Poland in the division of Czechoslovakia is well known. What then to resent that later

50

Poland has already been divided for a year! However, it's not about that.

As part of the process of rewriting history, the version of an allegedly preventive German strike on the Soviet Union is quite popular. The essence of the idea is that Stalin was about to attack, and Hitler simply forestalled him. The promotion of this "project" began a long time ago - on the very first day of the Great Patriotic War. Thus, in a statement handed over to the Soviet government by the German ambassador F. Schulenburg an hour and a half after the start of the German invasion, it was stated that the German side was forced to take the path of a preventive war against the USSR, since it allegedly did not fulfill its obligations under the Soviet Union. German treaty and prepared to attack Germany. The memorandum presented by Ribbentrop on June 22 to the Soviet ambassador in Berlin was drawn up in the same spirit. It stated that the Soviet government was striving to blow up Germany from within and was ready to carry out aggression against it at any time. Such a "dangerous situation" allegedly forced the Nazi government to start a war. On the same day, Ribbentrop held a press conference for representatives of the foreign and German press, at which he stated that Germany had been forced to launch an offensive against the Soviet Union in order to outstrip the Soviet offensive.

The version of a preventive war on the part of Germany was completely exposed at the Nuremberg trials of the main German war criminals. The evidence under the heading "Aggression against the USSR", the testimonies of the defendants and witnesses irrefutably confirmed that the attack on the USSR was conceived and planned deliberately, without any reason for it on his part. In particular, the former head of the German press and broadcasting, G. Fritzsche, stated in his testimony that he "organized a wide campaign of anti-Soviet propaganda, trying to convince the public that this war was to blame.

51

not Germany, but the Soviet Union... We had no grounds to accuse the USSR of preparing a military attack on Germany."

The judgment of the Nuremberg Tribunal on this matter states: "On June 22, 1941, without declaring war, Germany invaded Soviet territory in accordance with previously prepared plans. The evidence before the Tribunal confirms that Germany had elaborate plans to crush the USSR as a political and military force in order to clear the way for German expansion to the East in accordance with its

aspirations." And further: "The plans for the economic exploitation of the USSR, the mass deportation of the population, the murder of commissars and political leaders are part of a carefully developed plan, the implementation of which began on June 22 without any warning and without a shadow of legal justification. It was a clear attack."

Here, as they say, neither add nor subtract. Everything else is idle speculation. However, from the point of view of alternative history, this topic is of undoubted interest. Let's try and answer the question, what would have happened if not for ...?

So, suppose that Germany is white and fluffy, and the bloodthirsty Bolshevik Russia is preparing an attack. Before starting to build a more or less reliable version of events, it is necessary to agree on the basic conditions for reasoning.

The first basic condition is time. Indeed, if Germany attacked in June 1941, and according to the original terms, Operation Barbarossa was supposed to begin on May 15 (the deadline was postponed due to the diversion of part of the Wehrmacht forces to the Balkan campaign), then when, in fact, the Germans expected the Russian offensive? Supporters of the theory of the first Soviet strike believe that the border grouping of the Red Army was created specifically for the offensive. And it continued to grow. In support of this point of view, the fact of promotion from the rear military districts

52

to the west of seven combined arms armies and one rifle corps.

Indeed, the 22nd Army advanced from the Ural Military District to the Idritsa, Sebezh, Vitebsk region, the 16th Army from the Trans-Baikal District to the Berdichev region, Proskurov - the 16th Army, from the North Caucasian District to the Cherkassy region, Belaya Tserkov - 19th Army. I am an army, from the Volga district to the Chernigov region, Konotop - the 21st army. The Kharkov district advanced the 25th rifle corps to the west. At the same time, the troops of the 20th, 24th and 28th armies were preparing for redeployment. These seven armies (16th, 19th, 20th, 21st, 22nd, 24th and 28th) constituted the second strategic echelon. At the same time, the last three armies were planned to be concentrated in the Moscow region. By the beginning of the war, only a few formations of the 19th Army managed to concentrate in the designated areas, while the majority were on the way or at the points of their previous deployment.

If we assume that the Red Army was preparing for an offensive and the armies of the second strategic echelon were intended to develop success, then the choice of areas for their concentration cannot but cause surprise. They were separated from the state border and from the troops of the first strategic echelon by 450 to 600 km! But we can do anything, suppose that these armies were concentrated for an offensive, and it was this process that limited the time for the Germans to make a decision. Based on the available data, it can be confidently asserted that the concentration of these associations in new areas of deployment would be delayed until late autumn. Given the sad experience of the Finnish war, it is unlikely that the Soviet command would have gone on another winter campaign. This means that the Germans could not wait for the first Russian strike until the spring or summer of 1942. There simply could not be any planned Soviet offensive in 1941. With regard to this period of time, we can only speak of a fairly spontaneous preventive strike: the Soviet command learned about the concentration of German troops along the border of the USSR and launched a preemptive strike in order to defeat the troops

53

the enemy, who have not yet completed their operational-strategic deployment. I must say that the idea of such a strike was quite real. It was about him that was discussed in the draft "Considerations on the Plan for the Strategic Deployment of the Armed Forces of the Soviet Union in the West and East", signed on May 15, 1941 by the Deputy Chief of the Operations Directorate of the General Staff A. Vasilevsky. This document noted that Germany keeps its army mobilized, with deployed rears and has the ability to deliver a surprise strike. To prevent this, it was proposed to attack the German army at the moment when

it will be in the stage of deployment and will not yet be able to organize the front and the interaction of the combat arms. To protect against a surprise attack by the enemy and to cover the concentration and deployment of our troops, it was supposed to organize a strong defense and cover of the state border, using for this all the troops of the border districts and almost all the aviation intended for operations in the west. It was planned to have five armies in the reserve of the High Command.

However, despite frequent statements in the press that the draft operational plan of May 15 was signed by I. Stalin, S. Timoshenko and G. Zhukov or accepted for execution on the basis of their oral order, there is no documentary evidence of this. The document signed by A. Vasilevsky does not contain any resolutions or notes made by Stalin, Timoshenko or Zhukov. There is not even evidence that this development was submitted for consideration to the government or personally to Stalin. In the form in which this document has come down to us - a handwritten text with numerous corrections and insertions - it could hardly have been presented to the leaders of the country. Do not forget that until 1948 it was kept in the personal safe of A. Vasilevsky, and not together with other documents of the General Staff, in the papers of Stalin or Timoshenko, and from there it was transferred to the archive. So this note, most likely, was nothing more than a draft paper.

54

a working document, and not a really adopted operational plan.

Nevertheless, we will take this idea as a basis and talk about the offensive operation of the Red Army in May-June 1941. A reasonable question is why only in May and not in April? After all, this month the German grouping was even more underdeployed. Let us remember: according to the Barbarossa plan, it was planned to defeat the Soviet Union in 5 months, starting the operation no later than June. That is, it was supposed to be completed before the onset of winter. But why in May and not in April? The fact is that, in contrast to Western Europe, in Eastern Europe the paved road network was small, and in the USSR it did not exist at all in some places. Willy-nilly, the Germans had to wait for the roads to dry out. Trite, but true. The Soviet command would have to wait for this too. In a word, with the time of the start of the Soviet offensive, we decided: if we assume that the project of A. Vasilevsky was approved and a month was set for preparation, then we are talking about Sunday, June 15, 1941.

The second basic condition is forces and means. You have to know how to operate when modeling a situation. In the case of 1941, the solution of this issue suggests itself - the real forces and means of the parties. Stop, the reader will say here, how is it, because it is quite obvious that the grouping of Soviet troops was completely unsuitable for an offensive. Yes, indeed, in this regard, the forces were, to put it mildly, unequal. The German command deployed 103 divisions in the first echelon, including 12 tank divisions, while in the first echelon of the Soviet armies covering the border there were only 54 rifle and two cavalry divisions, that is, half as many. At the same time, the enemy divisions were fully equipped with personnel, weapons and military equipment, and vehicles. They not only had a general numerical superiority in forces and combat

means, but also possessed higher mobility and maneuverability.

However, if we talk about the Soviet pre-emptive strike, it is quite obvious that it would involve not only and not so much first-echelon divisions, but also second-echelon formations. In the latter, in turn, there were 11 rifle, 24 tank, 12 motorized and 4 cavalry divisions. In addition, another 45 divisions were in the reserve of the district command. In the case of preparing and delivering the first strike, all of them, of course, would have taken part in it. Most likely, in a month from the moment of the hypothetical approval of A. Vasilevsky's plan to the start of the offensive, all these formations would have been replenished with personnel. And even without the announcement of mobilization. In reality, in April-May 1941, given the growing tension on the western border of the USSR, the People's Commissariat of Defense and the General Staff, with the consent of

governments began to carry out covert drafting of conscripts under the guise of "big training camps." In total, according to various sources, from 750,000 to 850,000 people were called up in this way. This could not completely solve the problem of manning units and formations, but nevertheless it made it possible to bring 21 divisions of the western border districts to full wartime staff (14 thousand people), 72 divisions to a strength of 12 thousand and 6 divisions - up to 11 thousand people. It would be worse with technology.

As for combat vehicles, for example, in mechanized corps, it was impossible to increase their number in any cardinal way and bring it to the state for obvious reasons. Cars are another matter. As is known, on June 15, 1941, the Red Army had 272,600 vehicles of all types, which accounted for 36% of the wartime staff.

The basis of the Red Army fleet on the eve of the Great Patriotic War were GAZ-AA and GAZ-AAA trucks with a carrying capacity of 1.5–2 tons,

56

ZIS-5 and ZIS-6 with a carrying capacity of 3-4 tons. In small quantities there were five-ton cars Yag-4 and Yag-6 and eight-ton Yag-10. All these vehicles were commercial-type trucks and were used in the army in the same form as in the national economy without any structural changes. Therefore, according to their characteristics, they were not very suitable for operation in the army, especially in wartime conditions. Unlike the German Wehrmacht, by the beginning of the war, the Red Army had practically no off-road vehicles. The latter were represented by GAZ-60 (V) and ZIS-22 (VZ) semi-tracked all-terrain vehicles, created on the basis of the same GAZ and ZIS. However, their number was small, and technical characteristics left much to be desired.

The same situation has developed with passenger cars. The Red Army had three types of vehicles: GAZ-A, GAZ M-1 and ZIS-101. The most massive were the famous "emki" - GAZ M-1, seven-seat ZISs were used to transport the highest command personnel (corps, army, district). All these vehicles were not adapted for use in the army and had low cross-country ability. The exception was the GAZ-61 cars. It was an all-wheel drive (4x4) version of the "emki", created specifically for the army. However, the number of manufactured machines was very small.

There were even more problems with special vehicles — gasoline and water oil tankers, tankers, repair bat-tles (camping workshops on car chassis). The production of such machines at industrial plants was very small - for example, in 1940, with a plan of 2 thousand gas tankers on the ZIS-5 chassis and 150 water and oil tankers on the ZIS-6 chassis, only 155 and one (!) Machine were manufactured, respectively. Therefore, the supply of, for example, mechanized corps with tankers fluctuated within the range of 7-40%. In the Western Special Military District, the average staffing of tanks

57

out parts by water-oil and petrol tankers amounted to 15%.

It was believed that all this huge shortfall in the event of the outbreak of hostilities would be replenished by the receipt of vehicles from the national economy, that is, by mobilization. True, it is not entirely clear how they were going to do it. The point is that the Red Army needed 755,000 vehicles. To achieve such completeness, it was necessary to practically nullify the entire automobile fleet of the country, removing almost everything from the national economy. How this same national economy would continue to function under such conditions remains a mystery. In reality, in 1941-1942, the army received about 270,000 vehicles of various types from the national economy for mobilization. It is unlikely that during the month we are considering a noticeable increase in the Red Army's vehicle fleet, as well as changes in its technical equipment as a whole, should be expected. Both in reality and in simulated

In our situation, the Soviet troops were the same. With the same personnel, guns and tanks, the same logistics system, communications, and so on.

Undoubtedly, the mechanized corps of the second echelon of the covering troops would play a leading role in a preventive strike. According to the plan, the organizational structure of the mechanized corps was supposed to provide him with the opportunity to conduct independent combat operations in isolation from the combined arms armies. It is quite obvious that in our case all, or almost all, of these compounds would receive independent tasks. So let's try to figure out what would come of it.

It is quite difficult to consider the possible actions of all mechanized corps in the preventive offensive of the Red Army, mainly due to the limited volume of this article. In fact, such a review represents an alternative history of the initial period of the Great Patriotic War. Therefore, it makes sense to focus on a single operation involving

one or two mechanized formations and, using the example of their actions, evaluate how successful the first Soviet strike would have been as a whole. Since no such operation has actually been carried out, it must be invented. Take, for example, the Lublin Offensive Operation. What's bad? On the whole, our "debriefing" can be titled: "Actions of the 4th and 6th mechanized corps in the Lublin offensive operation on June 15-22, 1941."

It must be said that Lublin was not chosen by chance as the goal of our operation. The fact is that this city was in reality the target of the Soviet counterattack in accordance with Directive No. 3. This directive was sent to the troops on the evening of June 22, 1941 and pointed out to the military councils of the fronts the need to organize decisive counterattacks with the goal of defeating enemy groupings that have penetrated. The troops of the South-Western Front were to use the forces of two combined arms armies and at least five mechanized corps, with the support of front-line and long-range bomber aviation, to strike in converging directions on Lublin, encircle and destroy the enemy group advancing on the front Vladimir Volynsky , Krystynopol, and by the end of June 24, capture the area of Lublin.

As you can see, a front-line offensive operation was planned, in the event of a successful completion of which all the forces of the 6th German field army and the 1st tank group would have been surrounded. Here, of course, one can object that this directive did not take into account the real situation and the capabilities of the troops. But if the leadership of the armed forces and the country did not take into account, but simply did not know them in reality, then why should it take them into account in our case? By the evening of the first day of a real war, having practically no objective information either about the enemy or about their own troops, the command set the fronts the task of going on the offensive and defeating all enemy forces within two days! Moreover, it can be assumed that in the

59

If they had struck first, the tasks would have been even more global. In our case, we are talking about the offensive of two fronts - Western and South-Western - from the Bialystok ledge and from the Lvov region along converging directions to Lublin. The goal is the encirclement and, of course, the destruction of two (why waste time?) German tank groups at once. To accomplish this task, first of all, the forces of the 4th and 8th mechanized corps of the Southwestern Front and the 6th and 13th mechanized corps of the Western Front were involved. The main role was to be played by the 4th and 6th mechanized corps. It makes sense to dwell on them in more detail.

The 4th mechanized corps (commander - Major General A. Vlasov) began to form in July 1940 on the territory of Western Ukraine. The corps administration and corps units were formed on the basis of the administration and corps units of the 49th Rifle Corps. 3rd Motorcycle Regiment - based on the 53rd and 146th Cavalry Regiments of the 16th Cavalry Division. The corps included the 8th and 32nd tank and 81st motorized divisions.

The 8th Panzer Division was formed on the basis of the 24th Light Tank Brigade. In addition, the 51st and 54th tank battalions of the 10th tank brigade were assigned to form tank regiments of the division. The artillery regiment and motorized rifle regiment were formed from the 220th howitzer artillery regiment of the 7th rifle division and the 608th rifle regiment of the 146th rifle division, respectively. In September 1940, the 8th howitzer artillery regiment received new materiel — 152-mm howitzers mod. 1938, STZ-5 arrived to replace the ChTZ Stalinets-65 tractors. The regiment completely switched to mechtzag. On January 20, 1941, the regiment received 122-mm howitzers mod. 1910/30

Initially, the 10th Panzer Division was part of the corps, but in February 1941 it was transferred to the newly formed 15th Mechanized Corps, and instead of it, the formation of a new 32nd Panzer Division began in Lvov (based on the 30th and light tank brigade). 32nd

60

the tank division did not have time to receive all the artillery assigned to it by the beginning of the war. Her howitzer regiment had only one artillery battalion of 152-mm guns. But due to the lack of artillery tractors, even such a number of artillery regiment howitzers was transported in two flights. The 32nd separate anti-aircraft artillery battalion had three batteries, but only one of them had the materiel in the form of 4 guns.

The 81st Motorized Division, which was reorganized in January 1940 from the 81st Kaluga Rifle Division, was included in the corps. On June 11, 1940, the division set out from Lvov to the Zablotov region as part of the 12th Army, participated in the annexation of Bessarabia and Bukovina. In July 1940, the 81st Motorized Division returned to Lvov and became part of the 4th Mechanized Corps, which was being formed.

The high command of the Red Army attached special importance to the formation of the corps, which was located in the most important operational direction. Increased attention was paid to both equipping the corps with military equipment, including the latest designs, and combat training. So, already in August 1940, the first command and staff exercise was held to bring the mechanized corps into the gap, under the leadership of the commander of the Kyiv Special Military District, General of the Army G. Zhukov. Issues of interaction between the 4th mechanized corps and other types of troops were worked out. According to the results of the exercise, serious shortcomings in command and control of troops were revealed. Then, in August 1940, the first military exercise of the corps was held with the involvement of aviation. Topic: "Entering the mechanized corps into the breakthrough". Zhukov and the corps commander M. Potapov (A. Vlasov took command of the corps on January 17, 1941) worked out the issues of choosing the place of concentration of the corps on alarm, the line for entering the formation into the breakthrough and the procedure for advancing troops to the line. It was decided to introduce the corps into the gap in marching columns along two parallel routes. Such an exercise was held for the first time in the Red

61

Army, and its results, the organizers were satisfied.

The topic of the second military exercise, held already in mid-August 1940, was a logical continuation of the topic of the previous one: "Action of the mechanized corps in the depth of the enemy's operational defense". The pace of movement, bypassing and capturing strongholds, holding oncoming battles with enemy reserves and breaking through his rear defensive lines were practiced. At the end of September 1940, the final command and staff exercise of the 6th Army, which had the 4th mechanized corps under its operational subordination, took place: "The offensive of the army and the introduction of the mechanized corps into the breakthrough". This exercise was attended by almost the entire top of the Red Army: Meretskov, Timoshenko, Zhukov and others. An equally valuable command and staff exercise in the 4th mechanized corps took place on October 16, 1940: "March and oncoming battle of the mechanized corps." The headquarters of the 8th Panzer and 81st Motorized Divisions took part in it. Its purpose was to test the possibility of preparing and holding a march in a short time, as well

working out the issues of bringing to the attention of subordinates the decision of the corps commander about a sharp turn during the march to new routes in readiness for a meeting battle. The results of the exercise were highly appreciated by General of the Army G. Zhukov. The leadership of the corps received valuable gifts from the district command. The documents worked out during the exercise were brought in writing to the command staff of all mechanized corps of the Red Army.

By mid-June 1941, the 4th mechanized corps had 990 tanks, of which 412 were T-34s and KVs.

In accordance with the plan of the General Staff, the troops of the 6th Rifle and 15th Mechanized Corps were to break through the front in the zone of the 4th German Army Corps, thereby ensuring the entry of the 4th Mechanized Corps into the breakthrough already in the middle of the first day of the operation. All parts and connections left in advance

62

areas of permanent deployment and by the evening of June 14 moved to their starting lines.

As for the 6th Mechanized Corps (commanded by Major General M. Khatskilevich), it began to form on July 15, 1940 on the basis of the 3rd Cavalry Corps. It consisted of the 4th and 7th tank and 29th motorized divisions.

Tank regiments of the 4th division were created from many units and subunits - tank battalions of the 21st heavy, 6th light and 30th chemical tank brigades, 2nd, 6th, 13th, 50th rifle divisions, 632nd motor transport - tailor battalion of the 46th motor transport brigade. Due to the fact that the heavy tank brigade was not assigned its own motorized rifle and artillery units, the corresponding regiments of the 29th rifle division were reorganized into the howitzer artillery and motorized regiments of the 4th tank division.

The 7th tank division was formed in Volkovysk on the basis of the 11th cavalry division named after Morozov three times decorated. In addition, a tank battalion of the 21st heavy tank brigade, two tank battalions of rifle divisions (33rd and 125th), units of the 6th light tank and 43rd motor transport brigades arrived to equip the tank regiments of the division. . The motorized rifle regiment was formed from the 100th and 117th cavalry regiments, the howitzer artillery regiment - from the 17th horse artillery battalion of the 11th

cavalry divisions.

The 29th Motorized Division was formed on the basis of the 29th Rifle Division, and the 4th Corps Motorcycle Regiment was formed on the basis of the 6th Red Banner Cavalry Regiment of the 11th Cavalry Division. Also, a company from the motorcycle battalion of the district arrived to complete it.

The formation of the corps was completed on July 30, 1940, and on August 5, units and subunits began normal combat training.

The 6th mechanized corps was the most powerful of all the fur

63

corps of the Red Army - in terms of armored vehicles, it was fully staffed (1022 tanks) and had the largest number of T-34 and KV tanks (452 units); for the commanding officers, the percentage of staffing was 60-80%, for the junior commanding staff - 70-92%, for the rank and file - 94-105%!

In the interests of the offensive of the 6th mechanized corps, the 5th rifle and 13th mechanized corps were to operate. It was they who were to break the German defenses by noon on June 15 and ensure the entry into the breakthrough of divisions of the 6th mechanized corps at the junction of the 9th and 43rd army corps

Wehrmacht. Air cover for the actions of the 6th mechanized corps was assigned to the 9th and 43rd mixed and 12th bomber air divisions of the Front Air Force.

It should be emphasized that, just as the Germans failed to uncover the entire grouping of Soviet troops in the border areas on the eve of the invasion, the Soviet intelligence failed to uncover the grouping of German troops. We will assume that our command had an idea only about the first and partially second echelons of enemy troops.

The fighting began on the morning of June 15, 1941 with powerful artillery and aviation preparation. Artillery and air strikes were delivered to the entire operational depth, capturing both the first echelons of the German troops and the possible zones of the second ones. In addition, air strikes were carried out against all worthy targets in the zone of Soviet aviation, from field airfields to the railway bridge in Warsaw.

At approximately 4:30 am, the battalions of the 159th Rifle Division, supported by the tanks of the 37th Panzer Division, crossed the USSR state border. However, no one opened fire on them. There was no enemy defense, no trenches, no dugouts - the Wehrmacht was clearly not going to defend itself. A few minutes later, the first prisoners were captured - the secret of the 71st

64

infantry division, two stunned soldiers from what is happening. One and a half kilometers from the border, among the tent camp scattered by shell explosions, the chains of Red Army soldiers were fired upon by the enemy. However, the sporadic resistance of the Germans was quickly suppressed by the fire of tank guns. Defeat was felt everywhere, the result of artillery preparation and bombardment - scattered tents, abandoned wagons and wrecked cars. Everywhere lay the dead bodies of German soldiers in their underwear - the shelling caught them while they were sleeping. Apparently, the Soviet offensive came as a complete surprise to the enemy.

The enemy tried to provide organized resistance only 5 km from the border, somehow dug in and deployed anti-tank artillery. However, the regiments of the 10th Panzer Division were already approaching. The division approached powerfully, on a wide front with heavy tanks in front. The KV and T-34 tanks fired on the move with high-explosive fragmentation shells. Actually, there were no other shells in the ammunition of these tanks, about which the division commander, Major General S. Ogurtsov, reported to the command three days before the start of the operation. Fortunately, the German tanks have not yet come across, and the 71st and 295th German infantry divisions, which were badly damaged by artillery fire, were literally crushed by a decisive attack by Soviet tanks and infantry.

Since by 12.00 the advance of the Soviet troops was about 6 km, it could be considered that the first line of defense had been broken through. The commander of the South-Western Front, Colonel General M. Kirponos, who was at the command post of the 6th Army in Nemirov, ordered the 4th mechanized corps to enter the gap.

The corps went into a breakthrough along two routes, as was practiced in pre-war command and staff exercises. At the same time, his battle formations were supposed to stretch about 80 km in depth, which began to happen in practice. While the head outpost, the reconnaissance battalion of the 8th Panzer Division, entered the town of Yuzefov, most of the corps' subdivisions had not yet arrived.

Z A. Isaev 6 5

threw the original areas of concentration. The latter circumstance, however, did not bother either the command of the corps or the headquarters of the front. There was generally an upbeat, almost festive mood. The offensive developed successfully, right on schedule. In the direction of the main attack, a clear success was indicated, the enemy offered only weak resistance. So that the lack of vehicles would not slow down the advance of the 4th mechanized corps, the front commander ordered that almost all vehicles from the 15th mechanized corps, which was performing a secondary task, be handed over to him.

This decision, which made it possible to "raise" almost the entire 81st motorized division, soon turned into a disaster for the 15th mechanized corps.

By the end of the first day of the offensive, the warheads of the 4th mechanized corps had advanced more than 30 km! With the onset of darkness, the movement was suspended. At night, only the reconnaissance battalion of the 8th Panzer Division went ahead. However, the personnel of the rest of the units also did not manage to rest - tankers approached. It was decided to replenish fuel reserves for the future, no one knew how the situation would develop in the future. And since there were not enough specialized vehicles, most of the fuel was transported in barrels in the back of trucks, which significantly complicated the process of refueling military vehicles, with which they were eventually transported before dawn.

The Germans did not sleep either. Throughout the short summer night, the headquarters assessed the situation and gave orders to regroup forces. Taking into account the fact that the front in the zone of the 6th field army was firmly held, the commander of Army Group "South", Field Marshal von Rundstedt, decided to strike at the flank of the Soviet grouping that had broken through with the forces of the 48th motorized corps and cut it off. The 3rd and 14th motorized corps had to complete the rout.

At dawn on June 16, the 4th mechanized corps resumed its advance. The commander of the 8th reconnaissance battalion, which had gone far ahead, reported on the defeat of the enemy airfield in the vicinity of the town of Janow Lubel

sky, and also that he entered into battle with the enemy's motorized infantry, which approached from the north. However, even without this message, the activity of the Germans was indicated more and more. For the first time since the beginning of the offensive, a corps column was bombed by German aircraft. The cover fighters had not yet approached, and the effectiveness of anti-aircraft fire was reduced by the almost complete absence of 37-mm shells. However, by the middle of the day, the main forces of the corps - tank regiments of the 8th and 32nd divisions - approached Januv.

In the meantime, the advance of the 41st Infantry Division, which provided the right flank of the shock group, slowed down due to the fierce resistance of the 296th German Infantry Division. The latter was in the second echelon and was noticeably less affected by Soviet air strikes than other formations of the 4th Army Corps. Soon reconnaissance, including air reconnaissance, reported on German tanks moving to the southwest. To meet them, the command deployed the 10th Panzer Division, which, after a night march, occupied Tomaszow with its forward detachment. At the same time, the battle group of the 11th German Panzer Division approached the city.

Breaking into the city, the German tanks ran into the advance detachment of the 10th Panzer Division on its streets and, after a short battle, forced it to retreat. According to Soviet data, the Germans lost 20 tanks and 16 anti-tank guns in this battle. The losses of the forward detachment of the 10th Panzer Division amounted to 20 BT tanks and 6 T-34s. The latter were hit on the outskirts of the city by 88-mm anti-aircraft guns. German tanks, having slipped through the city, to the south-west of it collided with the main forces of the Russian 10th Panzer Division.

At 05:00, the 20th tank and 10th motorized rifle regiments of S.Ogurtsov's division again attacked Tomaszow without artillery and air support. The terrain for the attack was unfavorable. Soviet tanks had to overcome an elongated hill, behind the reverse slope of which were the Germans. aerial

enemy reconnaissance discovered Soviet tanks still on the way, and the tankers and artillerymen of the 11th Panzer Division managed to prepare for the meeting. The beating of Soviet tanks, which, by the will of the command, continued to attack without the support of artillery and infantry, continued until the evening. With the onset of darkness, the remnants of the 10th Panzer Division withdrew to their original positions, and the battle group of the 11th German Panzer Division moved further to the south-west, stopping at 23.00 for a halt.

In the battle near Tomaszow, relatively large masses of tanks acted on the Soviet side, supported by an insignificant number of infantry and completely devoid of artillery support. Deprived of a sufficient number of tractors, the artillery regiment of the 10th Panzer Division was still on the march. The 37th Panzer Division also did not take part in the battle, hurrying to the rescue of the motorized rifle and howitzer regiments of the 32nd division of the 4th mechanized corps, which, due to the lack of transport, followed their formation with a great delay. In the Yuzefuwa area, they were attacked by the German 16th Panzer Division. At the same time, another division of the 48th German corps, the 16th motorized division, felt a gap in the extended formations of the 4th mechanized corps and delivered a cutting blow to them.

By evening, it became clear that the rifle formations of the 6th Army did not have time to follow the rapidly moving forward tank divisions of the 4th Mechanized Corps. The situation was aggravated by the introduction of reserves by the enemy into battle - the 97th and 99th light infantry divisions. In this situation, a strike by the forces of the 8th mechanized corps on the flank of the 48th motorized corps of the Germans suggested itself. But the front commander hesitated, waiting for messages from the commander of the 4th mechanized corps, with whom there was no communication since 16.00. It was not possible to establish communication until the morning of June 17. The liaison aircraft sent to the headquarters of A. Vlasov landed safely, but was shot down by German fighters on the way back. In this situation, M. Kirponos decided not to risk one fur

corps on the third day of the war and authorized the entry into battle of the 37th rifle corps. It was assumed that, having increased their efforts, the infantry, together with the divisions of the 15th mechanized corps, would be able to break through to the 4th. However, this did not happen. Units of the 15th mechanized corps, which had been involved in continuous battles from the very beginning of the operation, suffered serious losses. Some of the tanks, in addition, failed, having exhausted their motor resources. Well, without the support of tanks, all the efforts of the infantry were in vain. The Germans managed to close the gap.

By the morning of June 17, the 4th mechanized corps was surrounded. And in parts. Both of his tank divisions were locked in the triangle of Janow-Lubelski, Krasnik, Turobin. As for the 81st Motorized Division, it had been cut off from the main body of the corps even earlier and was fighting to the southeast. For obvious reasons, the lack of fuel began to be felt in the tank battalions. About a third of the tanks were drained of it, providing fuel for the rest. The corps commander, Major General A. Vlasov, decided to continue advancing towards Lublin, hoping to unite with the troops of the Western Front there. But this was no longer possible - the 3rd and 14th motorized corps of the Wehrmacht squeezed the ring. All attempts to attack in different directions ran into fire from 88-mm anti-aircraft guns. The situation was aggravated by the fact that the tank regiments were surrounded separately from the infantry. In addition, on the third day of the fighting, the situation in the air leveled off, and German aviation interacted better with the ground forces. Our planes bombed at random, often covering their troops.

The 4th mechanized corps waged organized battles surrounded by another three days. Due to the small number of units, lack of fuel and ammunition, the defense was carried out by detachments in separate directions. The Germans soon succeeded in breaking up the "cauldron" into separate pockets of resistance. By June 21, several tanks and several dozen people concentrated around the remnants of the corps headquarters in the forest near the village of Batozh.

On the night of June 22, the corps commander ordered the remaining fuel to be drained into his KV. The last time the tankmen saw their commander's tank was when, having crushed the birch trees at the edge of the forest, he moved towards the German positions. A white flag fluttered over its tower.

Well, what about the 6th mechanized corps? Maybe he was successful in the Lublin operation?

At dawn on June 15, battalions of the 113th and 86th rifle divisions crossed the Bug in landing boats. They were accompanied by 17 T-40 amphibious tanks from the 13th mechanized corps. The rout carried out by the Soviet artillery allowed the infantry to advance almost unhindered 3 km deep into the Polish territory. Taking advantage

In the absence of German aviation, sappers began to assemble ferries and build a bridge. Instead of the expected (and supposed) two hours, they were transported for eight whole hours. All this time, the crossing of infantry, anti-tank and regimental guns was carried out with the help of landing boats, and light tanks T-26 - of the 25th Panzer Division with the help of ferries. The crossing of the main forces of the 13th mechanized corps and artillery began only in the afternoon.

Despite the fact that the divisions of the 9th Army Corps were located in one echelon, it was not possible to break through their defenses on the first day of the operation. Mainly because of the slow accumulation of forces on the left bank of the Bug. It failed to do so the next day. The troops of the 5th and 47th rifle corps managed to push the Germans back a couple of kilometers. As time went on, the Germans advanced the 13th Army Corps into the zone of the 9th Army. Therefore, the commander of the Western Front, General of the Army D. Pavlov, decided to commit the 6th mechanized corps into battle without waiting for the enemy's main line of defense to be breached. This task was facilitated by the presence of several pontoon bridges across the Bug.

Throughout the night and the first half of the day on June 17, formations of the 6th mechanized corps under the command of Major General M. Khatskilevich, fulfilling the assigned

70

task, advanced to the Bug and crossed to its left bank. The movement of a large mass of tanks was immediately detected by enemy aircraft, which began bombing the combat formations of units and crossings. Several times they were subjected to air strikes, while parts of the corps suffered losses in personnel and military equipment. Only one 7th Panzer Division lost 63 tanks in a day.

By 17:00, units of the 6th mechanized corps turned into battle formation and went on the offensive, and almost immediately ran into strong opposition from German anti-tank artillery. In addition, to repel the offensive of the 6th mechanized corps, the enemy brought in the 8th air corps of dive bombers. German planes fiercely attacked Soviet tanks, and, in addition to bombs, a special phosphorus mixture was used. The corps commander, Major General Khatskilevich, was forced to withdraw units from under air strikes.

On the morning of June 18, the 6th mechanized corps resumed the offensive. Due to the artillery lagging behind, artillery preparation before the attack and fire support of the advancing tanks were not carried out. The anti-tank defense of the enemy was destroyed by tanks, which suffered heavy losses. Practically no enveloping maneuvers of German strongholds were used, and frontal attacks did not bring success. The 29th motorized division with its right-flank 128th regiment in the area of Lositse entered into battle with the approaching 292nd infantry division of the enemy. Unable to withstand the German infantry attack with artillery, the regiment moved back. To the right of the motorized division, the 13th tank regiment of the 7th tank division, Major General S. Borzilov, fought. In the area with Mordy tried to attack the 14th tank regiment of the same division. With only a quarter of fuel refueling, the formation went on the defensive by the end of the day. It was only in the morning that it was possible to replenish stocks of fuel and ammunition. The corps commander gathered all combat-ready tanks into a fist and broke through to Sedl on the morning of June 19

71

tse. But it was already too late. Under the blows of approaching enemy reserves (46th motorized corps), the 6th mechanized corps was forced to leave the city. The commander of the 6th mechanized corps, Major General M. Khatskilevich, died on the same day in the battle formations of his troops. After his death, the control of parts and formations of the corps was disrupted.

The command of the 6th mechanized corps received an order to withdraw at 17.25 on June 20, but was no longer able to fulfill it: the enemy proceeded to active operations, trying to cover parts of the corps from the flanks. Tankers, having used up ammunition and fuel, began to destroy the surviving tanks and armored vehicles. By the end of the day, the corps ceased to exist as a mechanized

compound. The personnel made their way to the connection with parts of the 47th Rifle Corps and, together with them on June 22, withdrew beyond the Bug.

It must be emphasized that the version of events offered to the reader is, of course, schematic and superficial. At the same time, however, it contains real facts and descriptions of the hostilities that actually took place with these formations in the summer of 1941. They are simply transposed in space and time. One thing unites them - the end result. How so? - the reader will be indignant. — In reality, there was a German surprise attack, and in the case we are simulating, it was a Soviet one. And the result is the same? Yes, the same! Only the consequences are different. In the first case, the defeat of the Soviet mechanized corps took place against the background of the general defeat of the Red Army in the border battle, in the second, there was no general defeat, and the defeat of the mechanized corps was only the result of the failure of private offensive operations. And the border battle itself takes place on the other side of the border.

However, one should be aware that the Red Army could not inflict a decisive defeat on the Wehrmacht in the summer of 1941 either on this or on the other side of the border. There is no point in going into details and analyses.

72

to discuss the issues of the organizational structure, armament, technical equipment and the level of combat training of both sides. Based on all serious modern research, it can be argued that the Red Army was objectively weaker than the Wehrmacht. First of all, this weakness was expressed in its unpreparedness to wage a modern war. That is, the war that the Germans had been waging for two years. In this regard, the question is natural - why then was a preventive strike needed, which was obviously doomed to failure? Well, firstly, they would know where we would fall, they would lay a matting. And secondly, our reasoning simulates a tactical failure, not a strategic one. Let's try to figure out what a preemptive strike gave the Soviet Union.

So, in the model of events we have built, we will use in the offensive the troops of the border military districts — the first and second echelons, as well as the reserves deployed for the most part to the wartime states. It would not have been possible to concentrate large forces in the month allotted by us for the preparation of the operation. The main strike force is made up of mechanized corps, which are tasked with cutting and encircling enemy strike groups. The task is quite logical (it was set before the mechanized corps even in the first days of a real war), but it is extremely difficult to accomplish. Without a doubt, the Soviet troops would have been initially successful. There are several reasons for this: the suddenness of the attack (in any case, we agreed so, but in reality we were able to achieve absolute secrecy) and the enemy's lack of defensive positions (the Wehrmacht was located along the Soviet border in summer camps and on apartments), and indeed any coherent plan for defense. The latter circumstance, by the way, is another clear evidence that Germany did not expect any attack from the USSR in 1941.

It is likely that already in the first two days of the operation, the mechanized corps would have managed to break through the German defenses. This task was made easier

73

both the location of German troops in a number of sectors in one echelon, and the already mentioned lack of defense as such. However, success would be short-term. The Red Army of the 1941 model would hardly have been able to effectively increase its success. This was prevented both by limited mobility (the influence of this factor on the course of hostilities is very noticeable in real operations of the Red Army in 1941-1942) and by the imperfect organizational structure of the troops. Inevitably, all those shortcomings in the organization and equipment of the army, which in reality manifested themselves in the summer of 1941, would immediately appear, first of all, interruptions in communications and control, as well as in the material and technical supply of the advancing units and formations.

The Wehrmacht, on the contrary, after overcoming the initial shock, would have reacted to the circumstances quite quickly, which is modeled in our examples. Given the greater mobility of German troops and better command and control, it can be assumed that the maneuver of motorized and tank formations would be more effective than that of the Red Army. The organizational structure of the Wehrmacht, methods of employment and interaction of troops were more effective.

Touching upon the topic of interaction, I would like to say a few words about aviation. In the above description of possible hostilities, there is, as it were, no aviation, its influence on the course of the operation is minimal. This was done intentionally, so to speak, for the purity of the picture. However, most likely, a certain parity would have been established in the air: some qualitative superiority of the Luftwaffe against the quantitative superiority of the Soviet Air Force. Again, we will not find out how many and who had more "new types" aircraft, but HOW MANY "old" ones. It's not the point. In our case, it is important that Soviet aviation is not caught on "peacefully sleeping airfields", but is lifted into the air and operates. The losses of the Luftwaffe from the first Soviet strike, however, will not be overestimated either. They were hardly

74

would be too big. All the main German airfields were located much further from the border than the Soviet ones, there were more of them, they were better equipped and protected. In terms of effectiveness, the German anti-aircraft artillery, which had a large number of automatic guns, was better than the Soviet one. In a word, as a result of the first blow, Soviet aviation would not have achieved air supremacy.

With this general equality, the Germans had some advantage in organizing the interaction of aviation and ground forces. The system of applying for ground units for air support in the Red Army was cumbersome. A lot of time passed between the call of aviation and its appearance over the battlefield, the situation often changed, and sometimes an airstrike was delivered already on an empty place. The Germans, on the other hand, had aircraft controllers directly in the ground units, who directed the actions of aviation directly from the front line.

What do we have, so to speak, in the bottom line? Soviet troops cross the border and push back parts of the Wehrmacht. Several mechanized corps enter the gap with far-reaching targets, but the Germans, quickly maneuvering with mobile formations, cut them off and destroy them. What's next? What is the strategic gain? Yes, in time, of course!

The first Soviet strike could not pass without a trace for the Wehrmacht - only in the example we simulated at least five or six infantry divisions were completely defeated, and several more suffered heavy losses. The tank and motorized formations that took part in the battles with our mechanized corps would inevitably suffer losses. It takes time to make up for losses and put the troops in order, as well as to restore military and transport infrastructure destroyed by the Russians (exploded and burned warehouses, destroyed bridges, airfields, etc.). Note that all this licking of the sides is taking place against the backdrop of the ongoing war. Yes, yes, after all, with the first preemptive strike on June 15, 1941, a war began between

75

USSR and Germany. It is difficult to say what it would be called - the Great Patriotic War or something else, but it would be a big war. And the main question for Hitler is what to do next? It is quite obvious that the Barbarossa plan is not just bursting at the seams, it can be thrown into the trash. The situation has changed radically. The German plan of war is unraveled by the Russians. Now the Germans face not a peacefully sleeping country, but a front bristling with bayonets and gun barrels, which must be broken through in accordance with all the rules. In addition, it turned out that, contrary to expectations, the Red Army had a lot of tanks and aircraft. In a word, we need a new war plan that corresponds to the new realities. For example, the reality that on the southern flank the Romanian troops are retreating under the blows of the Red Army, and only the presence of several German divisions there made it possible to stop the Russians at the turn of the river. Seret. Confusion in the camp of the allies - under

the question of the participation of Finland and Hungary. And time goes by. It would have inevitably taken Germany at least two months to develop a new campaign plan and regroup forces and resources. And here comes autumn, it is clearly not possible to complete the Eastern Campaign before winter, the war inevitably passes into a protracted positional phase. A major offensive on the Eastern Front would most likely have to be postponed until the spring of 1942.

But this means that the Second World War would have gone according to a completely different scenario. This means that the Soviet Union would have carried out mobilization, would have transferred the economy to a "war footing", and not under bombardment and not in the process of evacuation. This means that Leningrad is not under blockade, and Kyiv has not been surrendered. This means that there are no millions of dead and captured, and the grain harvest in Ukraine is not harvested by us, not by the Germans. This means a completely different reality, with a much more favorable development of events for the Soviet Union. In any case, until 1942. What will happen in 1942, we will not fantasize, we will not calculate how much weapons the Soviet industry will produce, and how many

76

German, how relations with the allies will develop in the USSR and Germany, etc. All this is a topic for a separate discussion.

However, the preemptive strike of the Red Army in 1941 does not exhaust the topic of a possible Soviet attack on Germany. In this regard, it would be interesting to consider other possible dates for this event.

The year 1942 can be considered the least probable. It is not entirely clear why Hitler could delay the attack for a year. What could stop him? Soviet preemptive strike? But then it is no longer an attack. Perhaps Hitler could have been forced to cancel Operation Barbarossa only by some decisive actions of the Soviet leadership, for example, an open announcement in the USSR of mobilization somewhere on June 1, 1941, putting on full alert and deploying troops near the border etc. Of course, these measures would allow the German leadership to accuse the USSR of preparing for war, but at the same time they could give rise to doubts about the success of their plans. Postponing Operation Barbarossa for a year means that the situation we have modeled could have happened as early as 1942. We will not analyze it in detail, we will only say that the Red Army would have been somewhat different. True, the Wehrmacht would have been stronger, after all, not only Soviet industry, but also German industry would have been working for a whole year.

It is much more interesting to consider the possibility of a Soviet preventive strike not in 1942, and even not in 1941, but in 1940! The question immediately arises - why in 1940, and not in 1939? Indeed, in September 1939, the Red Army was already moving west, occupying Western Ukraine and Belarus. A war on two fronts was not foreseen - the fighting in Mongolia had been successfully completed by that time. The fact that the "liberation campaign" was carried out by limited forces means absolutely nothing. So many troops were involved in it (21 rifle and 13 cavalry

77

divisions, 16 tank and 2 motorized rifle brigades - 700 thousand people, 6 thousand guns, 4.5 thousand tanks, 4 thousand aircraft), as much as was necessary to solve the task. At the same time, yielding to the Wehrmacht in the total number of troops, the advancing Soviet grouping was comparable or superior to the opposing German troops in terms of tanks, artillery and aircraft. However, if necessary, it could be much larger. For example, a year earlier, when the USSR was ready to start an open armed clash with Germany over Czechoslovakia, 60 rifle and 16 cavalry divisions, 3 tank corps, 22 separate tank brigades, 17 aviation brigades, etc. In August 1939, during negotiations with the British and French missions in Moscow, the Soviet side declared its readiness to deploy against Germany 120 infantry and 16 cavalry divisions, 5 thousand heavy guns, 9-10 thousand tanks, from 5 to 5.5 thousand combat

aircraft. So there would be forces to strike at the German troops in Poland. Another question is how expedient it was to do this in September 1939? How necessary it was to engage in a head-on collision with the Wehrmacht exactly when France and England wanted it. It should be emphasized that by the autumn of 1939 the general political situation was unfavorable for such actions by the USSR. The development of events could lead to the conclusion of a pact between Germany and the Western powers and their entry into the war against the USSR. After all, England and France, already in a state of war with Germany, were going to send troops to Finland! The Soviet offensive against Germany in 1939 could actually lead to a "crusade" against the USSR. Another thing - in 1940! The main condition in preparing such a blow is to choose the right time. General preparations should have begun immediately after the end of the war with Finland, and more specifically decided later. The Soviet leadership, of course, did not know the plans of Germany, with the plan

78

"Gelb" was not acquainted, but the beginning of hostilities in the West on May 10, 1940 gave a kind of go-ahead. And in general, by May everything should have been ready. The most suitable time for the offensive of the Red Army is June 1.

Indeed, by this time the entire German active army was in the West. And not just was, she was fighting, requiring a colossal effort. All tanks and planes were on the Western Front. The Germans raked out practically all the manpower reserves. Suffice it to say that only 7 infantry divisions were at the disposal of the command in the East, in the governor general (the part of Poland occupied by the Germans) and the 1st corps district (East Prussia). Moreover, these were by no means selective formations, but Landwehr divisions, staffed by older conscripts, and divisions for the protection of the rear, which were still in the formation stage. All these formations were armed with obsolete or captured Polish weapons, had a limited amount of artillery (from a division to a battery per division) and vehicles.

The construction of fortifications in the East (anti-tank ditch along the border and field fortifications) was also seriously delayed. For this, there simply were not enough forces and means. They were also taken by the Western Front. In the diary of the Chief of the General Staff of the Ground Forces, Colonel General F. Halder, for example, on April 8, 1940, the following entry was made: "The armor of the dome, intended for East Prussia, should be kept in readiness for use in the West."

Thus, it can be stated that Germany was practically defenseless from the east.

Well, what forces could the Red Army attract for the offensive? Yes, they all were! In this regard, it makes no sense to count how many and what kind of troops were in the Kiev and Belorussian Special Military Districts. Moreover, as of June 1, 1940, Kalininsky and Lenin were also border

79

city military districts (the Baltic military district did not yet exist). The formations stationed in the non-border Moscow, Oryol and Kharkov military districts could also be involved in such an operation. Undoubtedly, the consequences of the Soviet-Finnish war became an aggravating factor in the preparation of such an operation. A certain redeployment of the units and formations that took part in it would be required. However, such a redeployment was actually carried out anyway in connection with the preparations for the operation in the Baltic states. In addition, some of the formations that participated in the battles with the Finns were returned to their places of permanent deployment by the summer of 1940. So there was nothing impossible about it.

However, in a certain sense, the troops that did not participate in the hostilities also suffered losses. To the greatest extent, this affected tank units. So, for example, in a number of tank brigades

several military districts were formed and sent to the Finnish front, seven consolidated tank regiments. Moreover, after the end of the war, not all of them returned to their units. Unfortunately, there are no complete data on the military districts for the spring of 1940, but we still managed to collect something. Let's take at least information on tank brigades.

On September 17, 1939, the Belorussian Front had 8 tank brigades. As of May 1940, there were only 6 of them - the 2nd light tank brigade had been in Lithuania since the autumn of 1939, and the 29th light tank brigade, which took part in the Soviet-Finnish war, did not return to the district. The remaining six brigades had about 1,100 tanks (none of the brigades were completed to full strength). At the beginning of the "liberation campaign", the troops of the Ukrainian Front also had 8 tank brigades. By the summer of 1940, the same number remained. The 4th light tank brigade was transferred to the Odessa military district. Formally, it would include

80

The 23rd light tank brigade was also transferred to the city, but in the spring of 1940 it still continued to be deployed on the territory of the Kyiv Special Military District in the city of Stryi. In addition, the district was replenished with the 49th light tank brigade. In total, there were about 1300 tanks in the brigades of the Kyiv district. Thus, only in the tank brigades of the two districts there were about 2400 tanks. But in addition to the tank brigades, the 1st Moscow motorized rifle and 81st motorized divisions were deployed on their territory, which also included tanks. How many. — hard to say. According to the state, a motorized division was supposed to have 257 tanks. It can be stated with some certainty that the 1st motorized rifle division, which arrived in Belarus from the Moscow Military District, was completed to the state. There are no data for the 81st Motorized Division. Tank regiments (64 BT tanks) consisted of 10 cavalry divisions of both districts, and 44 rifle divisions included tank battalions of 30 to 52 T-26 tanks each. As a result, the total number of tank units and formations of the Kiev and Belorussian military districts was at least 5 thousand units.

After the end of the Soviet-Finnish war, there were 7 tank brigades on the territory of the Leningrad Military District, three of which were part of the troops introduced in June 1940 into the Baltic states. In these 7 brigades, there were about 1200 tanks, in total there were at least 2 thousand combat vehicles in the troops of the district.

It is well known that a significant part of Soviet tanks, especially those manufactured before 1935, were technically faulty. But even if we take the number of faulty vehicles equal to 50%, we can talk about at least 3,000 combat-ready tanks. For other branches of the military, the picture was no worse, if not better.

As for the Wehrmacht, by the beginning of the French campaign on May 10, 1940, it had 3620 tanks, of which 2597 vehicles were combat-ready. But on the date we adopted - June 1 - this number was less.

81

How much is hard to say. The irretrievable losses of the Panzerwaffe during the fighting in the West amounted to 812 tanks. If we consider that half of the tanks were knocked out by June 1 (in fact, the Wehrmacht lost most of the tanks in May), then the number of combat-ready German tanks is approximately 2100 units. But it was in the West, in the East there was nothing.

On June 1, 1940, the Red Army would have entered Poland and East Prussia like a knife through butter. To do this, however, would have to abandon the operation in the Baltic. However, she still would not have gone anywhere from us. By the way, the invasion of East Prussia was best carried out through the territory of Lithuania. It already had a tank brigade and a rifle division of the Red Army. Two tank brigades were located near Vilna, two more - near Pskov. In total, this is over 900 tanks!

Given the small number of German troops in the east, it can be assumed that the advance of the Red Army units would have been carried out at a pace close to that of the "liberation campaign". And maybe even higher, given the best road network in Central Poland and even more so in East Prussia. Even if the Soviet troops were advancing at the same cost as in 1939, then mobile formations should have traveled no less than 50 km per day. The first units of the Wehrmacht, removed from the Western Front, could appear in the East not earlier than in 5 days. This conclusion was made on the basis of information about the transfer of troops from East to West, gleaned from the military diary of F. Halder. During this time, the Red Army would have reached the line Krakow, Lodz, Danzig. The Germans were able to stop the advance of the Soviet troops, having transferred a sufficient number of troops from the West, only at the borders of the Reich. Thus, in 7-8 days, Germany could lose everything conquered in 1939, and even East Prussia to boot. Indeed, "with little blood, with a mighty blow"!

82

And what's next? It can be assumed that such a decisive entry of the USSR into the war could stimulate the desire of France to continue resistance. Especially since the Germans would have had to at least halve their troops in the West. And that would mean the worst German nightmare — a war on two fronts! Was Germany capable of waging such a war in 1940? Perhaps, especially given the shorter length of the front line than, for example, in the real 1944. But the course of this war would have been completely different. Firstly, because the territory of Germany would have been under attack already in 1940. Secondly, because, most likely, Germany would have been left without allies - it is somehow difficult to imagine that Slovakia, Hungary, Romania and Finland would have got involved in a war in this situation. Italy, having suffered an inevitable defeat at the hands of the British in Africa, would have seriously moderated her ardor. Thirdly, the opponents of Germany, primarily the USSR, would be in much more favorable conditions. In general, the Soviet Union would conduct military operations exclusively on foreign territory. How long Germany could wage war without the resources of all of Europe (without Romanian oil, for example), one can only guess. It seems, however, that the mood in Germany itself would undergo serious

changes.

Well, what if France did stop the resistance? Well, the situation for the USSR would become more difficult, since the Germans could send a significantly larger number of troops to the Eastern Front. Nevertheless, combat operations would still have been conducted not on our territory and under completely different conditions - without a sudden German attack. Even if the Red Army retreated, the war would not come to the USSR soon, if it came at all. And there is no need to even talk about the retreat to the Volga.

By the way, in the proposed scenario, if the European powers — France, Great Britain and the USSR — deal with Germany on their own, there is one far-reaching trail

83

The effect is a somewhat different, much more modest, role of the United States in the post-war order of the world. Even if the Soviet Union had waged a war on its own and the United States would have entered it, then it is worth considering where the Red Army would meet with the allies if they had delayed the landing until 1944. And would the war continue until 1944?

Considering the variant of 1940, it is necessary to mention one more scenario of the first Soviet strike - a preventive offensive in the fall, for example, in September-October. Strictly speaking, it is precisely this that fully corresponds to the definition of such actions—preventing the enemy in operational-strategic deployment. In the 1941 version, such a deployment had already been completed by Germany, and in June 1940 it had not yet begun. For the Soviet Union, the situation in the autumn of 1940 was less advantageous, since the fighting in the West had already ended and some of the Wehrmacht formations had been transferred to the East. Nevertheless

The Soviet preemptive strike could have been quite effective, at least compared to a similar strike in 1941, mainly because the German troops had not yet completed their deployment, and the reform in the Red Army had not yet reached the point of absurdity, especially in tank troops. Again, in this situation, the participation of Romania and Finland in the war would be controversial. Relations between Romania and Germany, for example, were complicated in 1940 (Germany supported the USSR in its claims to Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina), and the Germans seriously considered a plan to invade Romania and take control of the oil fields.

In any case, the outbreak of war by the Soviet Union in the autumn of 1940 would not have led to a tragic development of events for our country along the lines of 1941. Even with the relative failure of the first strike, the war would inevitably pass for some time into a positional phase, during which both sides would accumulate forces. The Germans were able to strike back

84

not earlier than May 1941. And it was possible to prepare for this, in the presence of brains, of course.

The reader may have a question: how can this be, because in all the options considered, a cynical violation of the non-aggression pact with Germany by the Soviet Union is assumed! What does it look like from an ethical point of view? What can be said about this? Politics and ethics don't really mix well. Politics, as you know, is a dirty business, and war, as its continuation, is even dirtier. And why, in fact, to be ashamed, after in August 1939 the USSR and Germany cynically distributed the zones of occupation in Eastern Europe? Who is stronger is right! Besides, the Germans needed the non-aggression pact more than we did. It is generally accepted that we have received a respite. Which one, may I ask? We got the war in 1941, which, as it turned out, we did not count on at all. But cunning Hitler, thanks to Stalin's highly ethical fulfillment of the terms of the pact, secured himself from the rear in 1940! For which a year later and thanked! No, it was necessary to give him a kick in June 1940, and then figure out who is right and who is wrong in Silesia, and not near Moscow.

What can be said in conclusion? It turns out that against the backdrop of a real German attack on the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941, there are at least three possible scenarios for the development of events. Moreover, all of them are connected with the possible infliction of a preemptive strike by the Red Army. Despite all the possible differences, these scenarios have one thing in common — much milder consequences for the USSR. But, alas, what happened happened. The politician from Comrade Stalin was useless. From the point of view of the ability to weave apparatus intrigues, he was certainly out of competition, but in everything else ... He clearly did not possess the gift of foresight, the ability to calculate the situation ahead and make the best decision, which clearly confirms the case we are considering. Of the possible options for the entry of the Soviet Union into World War II, he chose the worst!

Mikhail Meltyukhov

GERMANY

IN SOVIET MILITARY PLANNING IN 1940-1941.

specific military preparations of the USSR, a key place was occupied by the activities of the General Staff on military planning, which, unfortunately, still contains a significant number of "blank spots", which is associated with the secrecy of the relevant documents of 1939-1941. Today, domestic historiography has a fairly complete picture of the development of military planning documents at the strategic level, but their content, as well as their connection with planning at the level of military districts, still remains

poorly studied. The content of Soviet military plans is traditionally presented in Russian literature according to a well-established scheme: the plans were developed in response to the growth of the German threat and provided for repelling an enemy attack, delivering retaliatory counterattacks, and a general offensive to defeat the enemy. According to this

According to the plan, the covering armies were tasked with defending on the state border line for 10-15 days, preventing the enemy from invading Soviet territory, and preparing to go on the offensive together with the armies of the second strategic echelon!. Soviet diplomatic and military documents of 1939-1941 introduced into scientific circulation in recent years. show that no foreign policy zigzags prevented the Soviet leadership from considering Germany as a potential adversary and carefully preparing for war. WITH

with the emergence of

the Soviet-German border in October 1939. The General Staff of the Red Army began to develop a plan in case of war with Germany?. This process acquired particular intensity from the second half of March 1940, and from 1940-1941. Five variants of the plan for the operational use of the Red Army in the event of war were developed. This, of course, does not exclude the existence of other working options that are still not available to researchers, which makes it difficult to analyze the progress in the development of these documents.

At the same time, we should not forget that the published documents, although they played a key role in Soviet military planning, did not exhaust it. First, these documents had a number of graphical and textual appendices that detailed their content. Secondly, in addition, there was a note on the procedure for the strategic deployment of the armed forces (tasks of the fronts and fleets) with a map and a summary table of the distribution of military formations, aviation and parts of the RGC by fronts and armies; a strategic transportation plan for the concentration of armed forces in the theater of operations; strategic deployment cover plans; a plan for organizing the rear and material support of the army in the field; plans for communications, military communications, air defense and other documents. A comprehensive study of all these materials, which in the aggregate constituted the Soviet operational plan, which ensured the organized deployment and entry into combat operations of the Red Army in accordance with the goals and objectives of the first strategic operations,³ still remains, unfortunately, unfeasible. For the time being, we are forced to confine ourselves to reviewing the available texts of four memorandums addressed to I.V. Stalin and V.M. Molotov containing the main ideas of military plans. The direct development of these documents was carried out by the Deputy Chiefs of the Operational Directorate of the General Staff, Major General A.M. Vasilevsky (Northern, Northwestern

87

and Western directions) and A.F. Anisov (South-Western and Southern directions)>.

Before proceeding to the analysis of these documents, we should at least briefly dwell on the chronology of the process of their development. The first version of the document, codenamed "Considerations on the Fundamentals of the Strategic Deployment of the Armed Forces of the Soviet Union in the West and East in 1940-1941." was prepared by the end of July 1940. There are two complementary versions in the literature regarding his fate. Some authors believe that the change in the western borders of the USSR in August 1940 and the formation of new formations of the Red Army required a significant revision of the document. According to others, this plan was reported to the People's Commissar for Defense Marshal of the Soviet Union S.K. Timoshenko, who did not approve of it, because he believed that it attached excessive importance to the enemy grouping located north of Warsaw and in East Prussia, and insisted on a more thorough study of the option when the main enemy forces would be deployed south of Warsaw.

Be that as it may, by September 18 a new version of the plan was prepared, which took into account the possibility of using the main forces of the Red Army, depending on the situation in the North-West or South-West directions. It is these options for the deployment of Soviet troops that are referred to in historiography as "northern" and "southern" respectively. This feature of planning was a kind of tradition of the Soviet General Staff, since in 1921-1939. The Western Theater of Operations (TVD) was divided almost exactly in the middle by the Pripyat River basin. From September 1939, this river flowed completely through the territory of the USSR, but out of habit, it was this line, extrapolated further to the west, that divided the theater of operations into two main

directions. On October 5, 1940, this version of the plan was reported to Stalin and Molotov. During the discussion, Gen

The headquarters was instructed to finalize the plan, taking into account the deployment of an even stronger main grouping in the South-Western direction. As a result, it was envisaged to increase the number of troops on the Southwestern Front by 31.25% in divisions, by 300% in tank brigades, and by 59% in air regiments.

On October 14, the revised "southern" version of the plan was approved as the main one, but it was decided to "have developed" the "northern" version. The development of both options in the field was planned to be completed by May 1941. Thus, the Soviet armed forces received a valid document, on the basis of which more detailed military planning was carried out. Commanders of troops, members of the Military Councils and chiefs of staff of military districts were summoned to the General Staff to develop operational documents, which were immediately approved by the People's Commissar of Defense. In addition to this document, the plans for military operations against Finland, Romania and Turkey were reported to the Soviet leadership, which, according to their developers, gave the entire operational plan the necessary completeness and flexibility, made it possible to act depending on the specific military-political situation. Unfortunately, almost all of these documents remain secret, and it is unlikely that historians will soon be able to study them.

However, the development of military plans did not end there. The military leadership sought to comprehensively evaluate both options for the actions of the Red Army included in the operational plan. To work out the "northern" and "southern" options, on January 2-6 and 8-11, 1941, two operational-strategic games were held at the General Staff. In the first game, offensive actions of the Red Army were played out in the North-West direction (Eastern Russia), and in the second - in the South-West direction (Southern Poland, Hungary and Romania). The defensive operations of the initial period of the war in the games were not played at all, to save

in the secret of the main idea of the plan, the tasks of the parties simply noted that the "blue" attacked, but they were thrown back to the border, and in the South-West direction, even to the line of the Vistula and Danube rivers on the territory of Poland and from these lines the game was already underway. On the territory of East Prussia, the offensive of the "Reds" bogged down, and in the South-West they achieved significant success, which led to the abandonment of the "northern" option of the Red Army. Thus, Southern Poland was determined as the main direction of the Soviet offensive?.

The revision of the documents of the operational plan, taking into account the experience of the January Games, was headed by the new Chief of the General Staff, General of the Army G.K. Zhukov. According to the "Plan for the development of operational plans", it was required to clarify the documents on the "southern" version by March 22, and on the "northern" version - by March 8, 1941. Unfortunately, it is not clear whether this task was completed, because the prepared By March 11, 1941, the new version of the plan finally consolidated the rejection of the "northern" version and reoriented the main efforts of the troops to the South-Western direction!?

The fate of this version of the plan is controversial in the literature. So, B.N. Petrov notes that on April 10, 1941, a directive was prepared for the development of a plan for the operational deployment of troops of the border districts, based on the ideas embodied in the plan of March 11. clarifying directives were prepared to the western border districts and to the People's Commissar of the Navy, but they were not sent to the addressees." However, as A.M. Vasilevsky points out, in this case the above-mentioned practice of summoning commanders of troops and chiefs of staff of districts to Moscow was again applied, who received all the necessary instructions! Therefore, Yu.A. Gorkov's conclusion that "the plan revised in March 1941 was not put into action"! 4, without an analysis of the still secret military planning documents of the districts, seems premature.

Be that as it may, work on refining the operational plan continued, and by May 15, 1941, another version was developed. Around this document in domestic historiography, a discussion unfolded on the question of whether it was approved by the Soviet political leadership. Documentary data that would give an unambiguous answer to this question are unknown, so the main arguments of the debating parties are based on circumstantial information. Some authors refer to the fact that this document lacks the signatures of the people's commissar of defense and the chief of the General Staff. Indeed, it is difficult to explain the lack of signatures of military leaders, but Yu.A. Gorkov notes that "after 1938, all operational plans developed by the General Staff did not have the signatures of the People's Commissar and the Chief of the General Staff (except for the September 1940 plan signed by Timoshenko and Meretskov)"! That is, the execution of the document dated May 15, 1941 is not at all something extraordinary. It can be assumed that the clarifications of the strategic deployment plan approved in October 1940 were drawn up in a working order. Doubts that Stalin was familiar with this plan are probably based on the fact that it lacks any of his resolutions. But the information reported by A.M. Vasilevsky about the procedure for consideration of such documents by the Soviet leadership, confirm that Stalin gave all instructions orally!

The main argument of the supporters of the traditional version about the defensive intentions of the USSR was the materials of the conversations of G.K. Zhukov with some military historians in the 1960s. According to V.A. Anfilov, in 1965 Zhukov told him the following: "The idea to prevent a German attack came to Timoshenko and me in connection with Stalin's speech on May 5, 1941 to graduates of military academies, in which he spoke about the possibility of acting offensively. way. This action, in a situation where the enemy was concentrating forces at our borders, convinced us of the need

91

develop a directive providing for a pre-emptive strike. A specific task was set by A.M. Vasilevsky. On May 15, he reported the draft directive to the People's Commissar and me. However, we did not sign this document, we decided to report it to Stalin beforehand. But he really boiled up when he heard about the warning strike on the German troops. "Are you out of your mind, do you want to provoke the Germans?" Stalin said irritably. We referred to the situation developing near the borders of the USSR, to the ideas contained in his speech on May 5... trumpet the newspapers of the whole world," growled Stalin. So our idea of a warning strike was buried..."!?

In 1966, Zhukov told N.A. Svetlishin that "I handed over my report to Stalin through his personal secretary Poskrebyshchev. I still do not know either the further fate of this note or Stalin's decision on it. And the lesson taught on this occasion to me was remembered forever. The next day, N.A. Poskrebyshchev, who met me in Stalin's waiting room, reported his reaction to my note. He said that Stalin was very angry with my report and instructed him to pass it on to me so that I would no longer write such notes "for the prosecutor" that the chairman of the Council of People's Commissars was more aware of the prospects for our relations with Germany than the chief of the General Staff that the Soviet Union still has enough time to prepare for a decisive battle with fascism. And the implementation of my proposals would only play into the hands of the enemies of Soviet power!

It is hard not to notice the complete difference between the two versions, which is very strange: after all, their author, according to the publishers, was one and the same person, a participant in the events described. Svetlishin's version looks especially implausible. First of all, it is not clear why Zhukov is transmitting top secret, especially important

92

sti document not to Stalin himself, but to his secretary. Not only is this practice not confirmed by other materials, it was expressly prohibited by the "Instructions for the Development,

use, accounting and storage of top secret documents of special importance in the central departments of the People's Commissariat of Defense and in the headquarters of military districts and armies", put into effect by order of the People's Commissar of Defense No. 0023 dated April 12, 1941. of particular importance are the operational documents relating to the plans for the operational deployment of the Red Army troops", which is confirmed by the presence on the document dated May 15, 1941 of the stamps "top secret/special importance". The instructions clearly stated that "the transfer of documents for signature, for a report, etc. through third parties (secretaries, adjutants, etc.) is prohibited. Documents must be handed over to the relevant officials from hand to hand. It is also not clear why Stalin could not personally tell Zhukov all that he allegedly conveyed through Poskrebyshv, who informed the general about it in Stalin's waiting room (!?).

Anfilov's version is more plausible, but it also contains clearly falsified information. First, the idea of preventing a German attack arose long before May 1941 and formed the basis of Soviet military planning in 1940-1941. Although it is possible that it was Stalin's speech of May 5, 1941 that prompted the military to prepare a clarifying document. Secondly, Stalin's response to this proposal looks completely out of place - what does "provocation" have to do with it? Thirdly, it is hardly worth reducing the meaning of Stalin's speech to a refutation of the statements of the foreign press, which was clearly not read in the USSR. Now this speech has been published, and everyone can see for himself that there is a complete discrepancy between its content and the cited version. The only thing that both versions agree on is Stalin's refusal to approve this document. It seems that this was precisely the goal of Zhukov's stories,

93

who was one of those who were interested in hiding the truth about the failed attack on Germany. Moreover, Zhukov was not in a position to allow himself to tell the truth, even if only by virtue of an undertaking not to disclose state secrets.

Yu.A. Gorkov puts forward a slightly different version to justify that "the Soviet Union was not preparing for aggression against Germany in 1941", referring to "the absence of a decision to start a war on the part of the Soviet political leadership and government ... Until now documents confirming the existence of such a political decision have not been found"²². Unfortunately, the authors who like to talk about the "political decision" about the outbreak of war are in no hurry to determine exactly which document is a "political decision". Moreover, disagreements exist even with regard to the actions of the German leadership. Some authors believe that Hitler made a political decision to start a war with the USSR in June-July 1940, when he gave the order to start planning it, while others argue that in December 1940, when he signed Directive No. 21 "Plan Barbarossa". However, it is known that even the Wehrmacht's order to attack the USSR dated June 10, 1941 suggested the possibility of its cancellation, and only on the afternoon of June 21 did the troops receive final confirmation of the planned operation?²³. Or, for example, the actions of the Anglo-French leadership, which planned intervention in the Soviet-Finnish war and attacks on Baku and Batumi, but, despite significant preparations for the implementation of these plans, London and Paris did not accept "political decision" to start their implementation.

As rightly pointed out by P.N. Bobylev, "one should distinguish between the decision to prepare for war and the decision to start it. The first could have been accepted long before the second"²⁴. By the way, the experience of the actions of the Red Army against Poland, Finland, the Baltic countries and Romania shows that initially the troops received

94

an order containing their combat missions and instructions on the period of concentration on the border. The specific date of the transition to the offensive was announced by a separate order in the last hours before its implementation. Thus, literally until the last moment, the Soviet leadership had the opportunity to take into account the likely change in the political situation and not bring matters to a close.

before the war. Thus, only an order to invade troops can be considered a "political decision" to start a war. Naturally, before June 22, 1941, the Soviet military-political leadership did not and could not give such an order to the Red Army, and therefore the whole discussion on this issue is groundless.

According to V.N. Kiseleva, V.D. Danilov and P.N. Bobylev⁷⁵, is the process of strategic concentration and deployment of the Red Army in accordance with this plan and its following refinements, which unfolded in April-June 1941. These events clearly speak in favor of the fact that the plan was approved. True, the moment of its approval remains unknown. It is possible that this could have happened on May 19, 1941, when Molotov, Timoshenko, Zhukov and his first deputy, Lieutenant General N.F. Vatutin⁷⁷. Yu.A. Gorkov, who was the first to publish this document in Russian scientific periodicals, also believes that the plan was approved and "in the initial period of the war, the actions of Soviet troops on the Soviet-German front were determined by the strategic concept of the operational plan developed in May 1941"⁷⁸. In another publication of his, he directly writes that this plan was approved on May 15, 1941 by the "political leadership of the state"⁷⁹.

To discuss the current situation and the tasks of the troops of the western border districts arising from this plan, on May 24, 1941, a meeting was held in the Kremlin

95

between Stalin and Molotov with Timoshenko, Zhukov, Vatutin, the head of the Main Directorate of the Air Force, Lieutenant General P.F. Zhigarev, commanders of troops, members of military councils and commanders of the Air Force of the Baltic (PribOVO), Western (ZapOVO), Kiev (KOVO) special, Leningrad (LVO) and Odessa (OdVO) districts. In June, the refinement of this document continued. On June 13, the first deputy chief of the General Staff, Lieutenant General Vatutin, prepared a certificate on the deployment of the USSR Armed Forces in the Western theater of operations, specifying the composition of the troops and their distribution along the fronts. At the same time, the idea of creating another front, the Southern Front, was being worked out, which was formed in accordance with the resolution of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks of June 21, 1941. 3.

Such is the generalized picture of the course of Soviet strategic planning in 1939-1941. Now we should turn directly to the analysis of the content of available materials.

The first parts of the documents were devoted to the assessment of the armed forces and the possible actions of potential adversaries⁸⁰. Germany, Italy, Finland, Hungary, Romania, Turkey and Japan, that is, almost all the neighbors of the USSR, appeared as such. The developers of the documents assumed that Germany, Finland, Hungary and Romania would be able to deploy from 236 to 270 divisions, more than 10 thousand tanks and from 12 to 15 thousand aircraft against the western borders of the Soviet Union. In the document dated May 15, 1941, this part contains information only on Germany, which could deploy up to 180 divisions for the war with the USSR. Probably, such a reduction is due to the fact that this document contains a plan of military operations mainly only against Germany. To prepare this part of the documents, the estimated data of the Intelligence Directorate of the General Staff were used, which were significantly overestimated, since in reality, by June 22, 1941, much smaller forces were allocated for the war with the USSR (see Table 1).

96

Table 1

ESTIMATION OF THE NUMBERS OF A PROBABLE ENEMY GROUPING AND REAL DATA AS OF JUNE 22, 1941

July September And March | June 22 | | 1940 1940 | 1941 | 1941

Divisions 173,200 | E

173

Germany | Tanks 10,000 10,000 10,000

| Aircraft 2000 | 13000 | 10000 | 3909 Sh Divisions 15 1518 1 18 7.5 nya (Tani n

| Aircraft 400 400 |

and Divisions 15

| Hungary | Tanks 300 300 |

| Aircraft 600 600. |

BS Division 33 D E

Romania | Tanks 250.

| Aircraft 1100

[Devin zaza | tm Total Tanks , 10550 10,550 10,810 4714 Aircraft | 13900 | 15 100 11 600 4739 |

Outlining the "probable operational plans of the opponents", the developers of the documents constantly emphasized that "the General Staff of the Red Army does not have documentary data on the operational plans of the probable opponents both in the West and in the East"? only about the most probable assumptions in this regard.

Germany's intentions were assessed in the July 1940 plan as follows. Deploying its main forces north of the mouth of the San River, it will deliver from East Prussia "the main blow to Riga, to Kovno [Kaunas],

4 A Isaev 9 7

Vilno [Vilnius] and further to Minsk." At the same time, in Belarus, attacks are being made on Baranovich and Minsk, as well as on Dubno and Brody, with the aim of capturing Western Ukraine. According to this option, up to 130 divisions would be concentrated to deliver the main attack, while the remaining 50 would operate in the south. However, the opposite option was not ruled out, when the main blow would be delivered in Ukraine, and auxiliary operations would be deployed to the north. In this case, the Wehrmacht will be deployed in reverse proportion. Offensive actions were planned from the territory of Romania to Zhmerinka and from Finland to the Karelian Isthmus, and later to Kandalaksha and Petrozavodsk.

Having outlined both options for Germany's actions, the authors of the document made the following conclusion: "The main most politically beneficial for Germany, and therefore the most probable, is the 1st option for its actions, that is, with the deployment of the main forces of the German army to the north. from the mouth of the river San"?33.

In the course of further processing of this part of the document, only partial changes were made to the text regarding the directions of development of German offensive operations and deployed forces. Much more important are the changes in the assessment of the main option for the actions of the German Armed Forces. If in the plan of September 18, 1940 it remained unchanged, then in the plan of March 11, 1941 it was believed that the main blow of the Wehrmacht would be inflicted on Ukraine, and in the north auxiliary blows would be delivered to Riga, Dvinsk [Daugavpils] , Volkovysk and Baranovich, however, the northern option was not completely excluded. The document of May 15, 1941 already proceeds from the probability of only the southern direction of the main attack of the Wehrmacht.

Thus, the assessment of the enemy's intentions, with the exception of the possible direction of the main attack, has not undergone significant changes. At the same time, it should be noted that in the absence of specific data on the actual plans of Germany, such

nye estimates proceeded only from the configuration of the Soviet-German border. According to A.V. Shubin, the developers of the documents completely ruled out the option of inflicting the main blow of the Wehrmacht in Belarus, as they assumed that Germany was preparing for a protracted war with the USSR, at the first stage of which it would seek to capture the Baltic states and Ukraine, and only then attack Moscow. "The fact that the main blow would be inflicted in the center seemed to be a strategic nonsense - after all, then you would have to conduct the entire campaign in one season, and even in divergent directions. It seemed incredible." However, today there is no direct documentary confirmation of this rather logical version, as well as an answer to the question on what basis the authors of the documents made a conclusion about the northern or southern direction of the main attack of the enemy. When analyzing these sections of documents, one constantly gets the feeling that their authors are engaged in simple fortune-telling. Moreover, A.M. Vasilevsky points out that the developers have "no direct answer to the main question – about the likelihood of Nazi Germany attacking us, not to mention determining at least the approximate timing of this attack"³⁶, which directly refutes the official version about the development of plans to repel the German sky aggression.

When planning the operational use of the Red Army, the authors of the documents carefully worked out the issues of its strategic deployment. Military planning documents make it possible to trace the dynamics of strengthening the Western theater of operations, to which it was supposed to allocate the main forces of the Soviet troops. According to the July plan of 1940, 68.7% of the available forces of the ground forces were allocated for operations in the West; according to the September plan — 68.9%; the March plan of 1941 provided for the allocation of 83.5%, the May one - 85.1%, and the June documents - 79.2% (see Table 2)³⁷. Documents dated July, September 18, 1940, May 15 and June 13, 1941 allow us to trace the dynamics of changes in the distribution of troops along the fronts (see Table 3).

001

divisions

Shooting

Tank

Motorized 7 31 27 31 30 31

Total 179 - 303

Tank brigades

air regiments

Table 3 PLANNED GROUPING OF FRONTS

AT THE WESTERN TVD September July 1940 May June

Fronts Division 1940 "North- | "South - 1941. | 1941 ny" ny"

M O S M S S S O O P E Z

front | Ia a Tank 3 3 3 — — brigades E S OZ SZ RZ IE

Severo-Motoriso- 2 2 2 2 2

Western |bathrooms

front * T Tank 3 - brigades E EV EE KEKI Motorized 3 3 7

West

front" Cavalry- 3 3 3 2 2

101

June Fronts of the Division 1941 | 1941

NY "ny" pa | 5 9 a

Motorized- 3 3 19 South-western western ano II- 7 7 7 5 I ZEE SU

tank brigades

*Including the reserve of the High Command in the rear of the fronts, but without taking into account the central armies of the reserve of the Civil Code according to documents dated 05.15 and 06.13.41

The main grouping of Soviet troops was to deploy in the strip from the Baltic to the Black Sea. The dynamics of changes in the distribution of forces in two strategic directions is presented in Table 4, from which it can be seen that the main grouping was deployed in the South-Western direction. In domestic literature, it has become commonplace to assert that this happened due to the incorrect determination by the Soviet military-political leadership of the direction of the future main attack of the enemy. However, as rightly pointed out by M.A. Gareev, "the direction of concentration of the main efforts by the Soviet command was chosen not in the interests of a strategic defensive operation (such an operation was simply not foreseen and planned - and this is the main mistake), but in relation to completely different methods of action." However, in the case of a Soviet offensive, "the mentioned option of choosing the direction of concentrating the main efforts in the South-Western direction

102

was fully justified and more profitable than in the Western direction, as it "lay on more advantageous terrain, cut off Germany from the main allies, oil, withdrew our troops to the flank and rear of the enemy's main grouping", whereas "the main blow in the Western direction led to a head-on collision with the main forces of the German army, required a breakthrough of fortified areas on very difficult terrain. "And completely different conditions, and, consequently, considerations could arise if the strategic plan provided for the conduct of defensive operations at the beginning of the war to repel aggression. In this case, of course, it was more profitable to have the main efforts in the zone of the Western Front. But such a method of strategic actions was not envisaged at that time"?°.

Table 4 OPTIONS FOR THE DISTRIBUTION OF SOVIET TROOPS IN DIRECTIONS⁴⁰

September 1940 | |

Divisions (%) |

| Tank | brigades (%) |

Northwest direction

6 (54.5)

106 (63.5) | 104 (63) 76 (38.2).

7 (63.6)

Air regiments (%)

Tank brigades (%)

Air regiments 58 (38.2) | 58 (39.2) | 88 (59.9) | 91 (72.8) | 85 (71.4)

(%)

103

What tasks were assigned to all these troops? According to a document dated July 1940, "the main task of our troops is to defeat the German forces concentrating in East Prussia and the Warsaw region; defeat enemy groupings in the area of Ivangorod [Demblin], Lublin, Grubeshov, Tomashov, Sandomierz with an auxiliary strike. Accordingly, the troops of the North-Western Front (8th, 11th armies, 37 divisions and 2 brigades) were tasked with "concentrating to attack the enemy with the ultimate goal, together with the Western Front, to defeat his grouping in East Prussia and capture the latter" .

The Western Front (3rd, 10th, 13th, 4th armies, 51 divisions and 4 brigades) was supposed to "strike north of the river. Bug, in the general direction of Allenstein, together with the armies of the North-Western Front, inflict a decisive defeat on the German army concentrating in East Prussia, take possession of the latter and reach the lower reaches of the river. Wisla. At the same time, with a blow from the left flank army in the general direction to Ivangorod [Demblin], together with the armies of the Southwestern Front, defeat the enemy's Ivangorod-Lublin grouping and also reach the river. Wisla".

The troops of the Southwestern Front (5th, 6th, 12th, 18th, 9th armies, Cavalry Mechanized Group, 57 divisions and 4 brigades) were tasked with "active defense in the Carpathians and along on the border with Romania to cover Western Ukraine and Bessarabia, at the same time, with a blow from the front of Mosta Velikie, Rava-Russka, Senyava in the general direction of Lublin, together with the left-flank army of the Western Front, defeat the Ivangorod-Lublin grouping of the enemy, go out and establish a foothold in the middle course of the river. Wisla".

According to the plan of September 18, 1940, "the main forces of the Red Army in the West, depending on the situation, can be deployed either south of Brest-Litovsk, in order to make a powerful blow in the direction of Lublin and Krakow and further to Breslau (Bratislava) (so in the text. -

104

"NORTH" version (1940)

| ©Valga

NORTHWESTERN FRONT

sk - 8, sd - 30, td - 4, md - 2, tbr-2

GK reserve

Ex. A - 1

sk-4, sd. 14,

td-2, md -1

tmk

Res. F WESTERN FRONT

sk- 13, sd -

Res. F cd -3, tbr-5

Brest td-1 Pinsk

Orsh

NORTH-WEST Borisov DIRECTION Mogilev? SK-21+4=25, . sd-71+14= 85,

td-9+2 = 11,

md-4+1 = 5,

-3, -7 Bobruys riya t

"Gomel 41, td -5, md - 2,

"Mozyr

Kovel's SOUTH-WESTERN FRONT

2mk sk-11 +1 = 12, sd-40 +4 = 44, td -7, 5A md - 3, KA -7, tbr -4

sk. Exactly SD.3/ Res. F

1

th

I o e OPOV AQI I

'Bratislava e2 MEX a

No.

at

d

HUNGARY

Debrecen

SYMBOLS

grouping of troops 074 according to the plan of 09/18/40, the actions of the troops according to the plans of July and 09/18/40, the first strategic task

6 i 100 150 g 25 t

Ploiesti about

Romanian

Kyiv?

I

M.M.) at the very first stage of the war, cut off Germany from the Balkan countries, deprive her of the most important economic bases and decisively influence the Balkan countries in matters of their participation in

war; or north of Brest-Litovsk with the task of defeating the main forces of the German army within East Prussia and capturing the latter.

It should be noted that, outlining two options for the use of the Red Army, the authors of the document emphasize that it is the "southern" option that is the main one. The rationale for this conclusion is also interesting: "The strike of our forces in the direction of Krakow, Bratislava, cutting off Germany from the Balkan countries, acquires exceptional political significance. In addition, a strike in this direction will pass through the poorly prepared territory of the former Poland in terms of defense.

The general task of the Red Army in the West was formulated as follows: "1. Active defense to firmly cover our borders during the period of concentration of troops; 2. In cooperation with the left-flank army of the Western Front, the forces of the Southwestern Front inflict a decisive defeat on the Lublin-Sandomierz enemy grouping and reach the river. Wisla. In the future, strike in the general direction on Kielce, Krakow and go to the river. Pilica and the upper course of the river. Oder; 3. During the operation, firmly cover the borders of Northern Bukovina and Bessarabia; 4. By active actions of the North-Western and Western fronts, tie down most of the German forces north of Brest-Litovsk and in East Prussia, while firmly covering the Minsk and Pskov directions.

The fronts also received corresponding tasks. The Northwestern Front (8th and 11th armies, 23 divisions and 2 brigades) were assigned the following tasks: "1. Defending the coast of the Baltic Sea, together with the Baltic Fleet, to prevent the landing of enemy amphibious assault forces; 2. Strongly cover the Minsk and Pskov directions and in no case prevent the Germans from invading

106

"SOUTHERN" version (1940-1941)

Valga

NORTH-WESTERN FRONT sk- 6, sd - 17, td - 4, md - 2, tbr -2

Reserve GK sk-1, sd-3

°^? WESTERN FRONT

sk-12, sd - 35, td - 3, MD -1, cd -3, tbr-4

sc-18 +1. \u003d 19, sd - 52 + 3 \u003d 55, td -7, MD - 3, cd - 3, tbr - 6

5 A "Kovel SOUTH-WESTERN FRONT sk-22 +2 = 24, sd - 71 +5 = 76, td -9,

Exactly md - 4, kd-7, tbr-5

Glöyöitz S

P + No.; Krakow;

\ Tarnow?

a ro, m ŷ. "SLOVAKIA

Bratislava

SYMBOLS

grouping of troops according to the plan of September 18, 1940

"== ACTIONS OF WU TROOPS

X

G

immediate task

the first strategic task according to the plan dated 09/18/40 the first strategic task according to the plan dated 03/11/41

according to the plan from 03 shade 2 romania =

5 10) 1 200 190 kt

to our territory; 3. In order to reduce the front of the 11th Army and occupy a more favorable starting position for the offensive during the period of concentration of troops in cooperation with the 3rd Army of the Western Front, seize the Seina, Suwalki area and go to the Shitkemen, Filipovo, Rachki front; 4. After concentrating troops with a blow in the general direction of Insterburg, Allenstein, together with the Western Front, to pin down the German forces in East Prussia.

The Western Front (3rd, 10th, 13th, 4th armies, 42 divisions and 4 brigades) received the following task: - Schema direction to Allenstein, tie down the German forces, concentrating in East Prussia. With the transition of the armies of the South-Western Front to the offensive with a strike of the left-flank army in the general direction of Ivangorod [Demblin], to help the South-Western Front to break the Lublin grouping of the enemy and, further developing the operation on Radom, to ensure the operations of the South-Western Front from the north ".

The Southwestern Front (5th, 19th, 6th, 12th, 18th, 9th and Cavalry Mechanized Armies, 96 divisions and 5 brigades) received the task: "Firmly covering the borders of Bes - Sarabia and Northern Bukovina, by concentrating troops in cooperation with the 4th Army of the Western Front, inflict a decisive defeat on the Lublin-Sandomierz enemy grouping and reach the river. Wisla. In the future, strike in the direction of Kielce, Petrokov and Krakow, capture the area of Kielce, Petrokov and go out. Pilica and the upper course of the river. Oder".

The main tasks of the "northern" version of the deployment of Soviet troops were to be: "1. Strong cover for directions to Minsk and Pskov during the period of troop concentration. 2. Inflicting a decisive defeat on the main forces of the German army, concentrating in East Prussia, and capturing the latter. 3. An auxiliary strike from Lviv not only firmly covers Western Ukraine, Northern Buko

108

guilt and Bessarabia, but also to defeat the enemy grouping in the area of Lublin, Grubeshov, Tomashev". The developers of the document emphasized that "the defeat of the Germans in East Prussia. and the capture of the latter are of exceptional economic and, above all, political significance for Germany, which will inevitably affect the entire future course of the struggle against Germany. However, "there are fears that the struggle on this front may lead to protracted battles, tie up our main forces and not give a reliable and quick effect, which in turn will make inevitable and hasten the entry of the Balkan countries into the war against us." The main tasks of the fronts remained the same as in the previous version of the plan*?.

In the above documents, the troops of the Northern Front, deployed against Finland, received limited tasks to ensure the defense of Leningrad, cover the Murmansk railway and maintain "complete dominance in the Gulf of Finland." The authors of the documents assumed that "Finland alone is unlikely to enter the war, the most real case is the simultaneous participation of Finland in the war with

northwest should be reduced mainly to the active defense of our borders. True, the tasks of the Northern and Red Banner Baltic (KBF) fleets testify that "active defense" was supposed to be on the territory of Finland."

We have allowed ourselves such a lengthy quotation, since this material demonstrates the absence of any connection between the actions of the Red Army and the possible actions of the enemy, which were mentioned above. The document clearly outlines the actual scenario of the start of the war, which is the basis for planning: under the cover of the troops of the western military districts, the Red Army is concentrating and deploying in the Western theater of operations, simultaneously conducting private offensive operations, the completion of the concentration serves as a signal for the transition in a general offensive

109

the entire front from the Baltic to the Carpathians with the main attack on southern Poland. German troops, as in the first version of the plan, are designated by the term "concentrating", which means that the initiative to start the war will come entirely from the Soviet side, which is the first to begin and complete the deployment of troops in the theater of operations. This conclusion is confirmed by a direct indication in the document that in the case of the concentration of the main forces in the North-West direction, "provided that the railways are operating in full accordance with the transportation plan, the day of transition to a general offensive should be set on the 25th day from the start of mobilization, that is, the 20th day from the beginning of the concentration of troops"". That is, the transition to the offensive is not connected with the situation at the front, but with the completion of the concentration of the Red Army. According to A.V. Shubin, "the whole operation [was] calculated on the fact that we were opposed not by a defensive grouping, but by two offensive ones, which had already unloaded in the areas of concentration, but were not yet fully ready for action. The blow to the concentrating offensive grouping is the most crushing,

The widely held opinion that the USSR first waited for an attack by the enemy, and only then planned an offensive, does not take into account the fact that in this case the strategic initiative would actually voluntarily be given into the hands of the enemy, and Soviet troops would unfavourable conditions. Moreover, the very transition from defense to offensive, so simple in abstraction, is a very complex process that requires careful and comprehensive preparation, which should have begun with the equipment of four defensive lines at a depth of 150 km. But nothing like this was done before the start of the war, and it is hardly worth seriously defending the thesis that the Red Army could successfully defend itself on unprepared terrain, and even in the event of a sudden attack by the enemy, which was not foreseen by Soviet plans at all. After all, "it was conceived to repel aggression by conducting on

110

the main directions of strategic (frontline) offensive operations. In addition, it is not clear why it is necessary to plan offensive operations if the troops are to defend against an attacking enemy. After all, no one knows how the situation at the front will develop during the defensive operation, where our troops will end up, what condition they will be in, and so on. In addition, the expectation of an enemy attack will not allow timely mobilization, which, accordingly, will make it impossible to implement all these plans.

It should not be forgotten that in developing the problems of the initial period of the war, the attention of Soviet military science throughout the entire interwar period "was focused on bringing their main forces into battle ahead of their opponent and under more favorable conditions with the outbreak of war. , securely seize the strategic initiative. The solution to this problem could be provided by: the creation of strong armies in peacetime, which could form the core of the main forces; advance comprehensive preparation of infrastructure, especially railways and highways, allowing the timely deployment of the main forces; detailed development of a plan for mobilization, concentration and operational-strategic deployment; creation of appropriate bodies for managing these processes; formation and

concentration in the border area of special mechanized and aviation formations, designed to disrupt the mobilization and concentration of the main enemy forces with the outbreak of hostilities; theater engineering equipment; preparation of the air defense system of the country; organization of the cover of the State Border for unimpeded mobilization, concentration and deployment of troops; advance, covert conduct of partial mobilization and concentration of troops """. As you know, these measures were consistently carried out in the pre-war period, which once again refutes the version of exclusively defensive

111

intentions of the Soviet military-political leadership.

Since the documents described in detail precisely the offensive operations of the Soviet troops, it is not possible to talk about the response actions of the Red Army. The content of these documents once again shows that the actions of the covering troops during the period of concentration and deployment are not necessarily connected with the repulsion of an enemy attack, but are a kind of combat protection of the troops being concentrated. In addition, it should not be forgotten that cover operations were undertaken by the Red Army in the autumn of 1939 when concentrating troops to attack Poland and Finland and in the summer of 1940 for operations against the Baltic countries and Romania.

The plan dated March 11, 1941, finally fixed the rejection of the "northern" option, since "the deployment of the main forces of the Red Army in the West with a grouping of the main forces against East Prussia and in the Warsaw direction raises serious concerns in the fact that the struggle on this front could lead to protracted battles, "and the main attention was paid to the further development of the" southern "variant. This document noted that "the most advantageous is the deployment of our main forces to the south of neg. Pripyat in order to set itself the first strategic goal with powerful strikes on Lublin, Radom and Krakow: to defeat the main forces of the Germans and, in the first stage of the war, cut Germany off from the Balkan countries, deprive it of its most important economic bases and decisively influence the Balkan countries in matters of their participation in the war against us. As S.N. Mikhalev, in this regard, "the strategic offensive operation of the Soviet troops in the Western theater was clearly formalized. Its concept included: 1) strong (apparently, active. - M.M.) defense to pin down enemy forces on the flanks in the areas of Memel, Ostrołęka and along the borders with Hungary and Romania; 2) main si

112

strike with the aim of decisively defeating the Lublin-Radomsko-Sandomierz enemy grouping, capture Krakow and Warsaw and reach the Warsaw, Lodz, Oppeln front. "The further strategic goal for the main forces of the Red Army, depending on the situation, can be set - the development of an operation through Poznan to Berlin or actions to the southwest to Prague and Vienna, or an attack to the north on Torun and Danzig in order to bypass East Prussia"?!

Thanks to the research of S.N. Mikhalev, we have the opportunity to get acquainted with the tasks of the Western and Southwestern fronts according to this plan. The Western Front "was to strike with the left wing in the general direction of Sedlec, Radom to assist the Southwestern Front in defeating the enemy in the Lublin area, and to ensure operations in the main direction, deliver an auxiliary strike in the direction of Warsaw, capture it and "take out the defense" on the river. Narew. The immediate task of the front was to capture the areas of Sedlec, Lukov and capture the crossings across the river. Wisla. In the future, they meant actions in the direction of Radom with the aim of encircling the Lublin grouping of the enemy in cooperation with the South-Western Front.

The South-Western Front was tasked with "concentric strike of the armies of the right wing in cooperation with the Western Front to surround and destroy the main grouping

enemy east of the river. Vistula with the simultaneous removal of the actions of the mobile group (two mechanized corps) to the western bank of the river. Vistula to capture Kielce. The main forces of the front, upon completion of the defeat of the Lublin grouping, on the tenth day of the operation, be ready to force the river. Wisla. At the same time, the left wing of the main grouping strike in the Krakow direction and, developing success with the forces of mobile groups (four mechanized corps), on the eighth day

113

the operation to capture Krakow, on the tenth day of the operation, withdraw the main forces of this grouping to the Miechow-Krakow-Tarnow region?

The above material unequivocally testifies to the continuation of the development of offensive operations of the Soviet troops. The opinion expressed in the literature that "the plan of March 11, 1941 is the most accurate final expression of generally accepted views and most accurately reflects Stalin's personal position" can only be partially accepted. Indeed, this document contains the quintessence of the "generally accepted views" of the Soviet leadership on the beginning of the war, but it was not final, since the process of developing the Soviet operational plan continued. The version that "the document was based on a defensive strategy" has no basis. The fact is that it clearly stated: "The offensive will begin on 12.6-5*". The exact date for the start of an offensive, as is well known, is determined by the side that plans to have the initiative to start hostilities. True, this deadline was not met, but its appearance in the document is very indicative, as well as the fact that this is the only document of Soviet military planning that was published in the latest documentary collection in extract '.

The clarification of the tasks of the Soviet troops found its further development in a document dated May 15, 1941. For the first time, it openly and clearly formulated the idea that the Red Army should "preempt the enemy in deployment and attack the German army at the moment when it is located in the stage of deployment and will not yet have time to organize the front and the interaction of troops. This idea, as we saw above, was present in a hidden form in all previous versions of the plan. Naturally, the drafters of this document speak of the possibility of a German attack on the USSR only presumptively.

The troops of the Red Army were tasked with striking at the German army, for which the "first

114

The strategic goal of the actions of the Red Army troops was to defeat the main forces of the German army deployed south of the Brest-Demblin line and reach the front of Ostrolenka, r. Narew, Lovich, Lodz, Kreuzburg, Oppeln, Olomouc. The next strategic goal is to have an offensive from the Katowice region in a northern or northwestern direction to defeat the large forces of the center and northern wing of the German front and seize the territory of former Poland and East Prussia. The immediate task is to defeat the German army east of the river. Vistula and in the Krakow direction, go to the river. Narew, Vistula and capture the Katowice area, for which:

- a) deliver the main blow by the forces of the Southwestern Front in the direction of Krakow, Katowice, cutting off Germany from its southern allies;
- b) deliver an auxiliary strike by the left wing of the Western Front in the direction of Sedlec, Demblin, with the aim of pinning down the Warsaw grouping and capturing Warsaw, as well as assisting the Southwestern Front in defeating the enemy's Lublin grouping;
- c) conduct an active defense against Finland, East Prussia, Hungary and Rumania and be ready to strike against Rumania if the situation is favorable.

Thus, the Red Army will launch offensive operations from the front of Chizhov, Lutovisk with the forces of 152 divisions against 100 German ones. Active defense is envisaged in the remaining sections of the state border."

The term "active defense" should not be misleading, as it meant the totality of defensive and offensive operations. Since the document repeatedly emphasizes that it is the Red Army that will be the initiator of hostilities, this term most likely hides private offensive operations to pin down the enemy.

The fronts received the following tasks. The northern front (14th, 7th, 23rd armies, 21 divisions) was supposed to provide the defense of the city of Leningrad, the port of Murmansk,

115

Kirov Railway and, together with the Baltic Navy, ensure our complete dominance in the waters of the Gulf of Finland." True, it remains unclear how the ground forces could ensure dominance in the bay without occupying the southern part of Finland.

The Northwestern Front (8th, 11th, 27th armies, 23 divisions) was supposed to "strongly cover the Riga and Vilna directions with a stubborn defense, preventing the enemy from invading from East Prussia; defense of the western coast and the islands of Ezel and Dago to prevent enemy amphibious landings. True, as the authors of the latest military-historical work note, the troops of the North-Western Front and two armies of the right wing of the Western Front "were instructed, under favorable conditions, to go on the offensive, the very strength of the enemy" in East Prussia?"

The western front (3rd, 10th, 13th, 4th armies, 45 divisions) was supposed to "strongly defend the front of Druskeniki, Ostrolenka firmly cover the Lida and Bialystok directions; with the transition of the armies of the South-Western Front to the offensive, a blow from the left wing of the front in the general direction to Warsaw and Sedlec, Radom, to break the Warsaw grouping and capture Warsaw, in cooperation with the South-Western Front, to defeat the Lublin-Radom grouping of the opponents ka, go to the river. Vistula and moving parts to seize Rad.

The southwestern front (5th, 20th, 6th, 26th, 21st, 12th, 18th, 9th armies, 122 divisions) had the following tasks: "a) encircle and destroy the main enemy grouping east of the river with a concentric strike by the armies of the right wing of the front. Vistula in the Lublin region; b) simultaneously with a blow from the Senyawa, Przemyśl, Lutovisk fronts, defeat the enemy forces in the Krakow and Sandomierz-Kielce directions and capture the Krakow, Katowice, Kielce region, meaning in the future to advance from this area in the northern or north

116

15 May 1941 variant

Valga

NORTHWESTERN FRONT

sd-17, td -4, md-2

Daugavpils

NORTHWESTERN

oFBorisov DIRECTION F Sd-48 +4 "=Yo 52, , Mogilev td-12+2=14, md-6+2=8, kd -2 Bobruisk

WESTERN FRONT

sd - 31, td -8, md -4, cd - 2 ° Gomel

"Rogachev

4 A K?brin

about 5 Brest Pins

>) lake

Ovruch

5 e5 SOUTH-WESTERN FRONT sd -74+14 = 88, d -28 +6 = 34, md- 15 +4= 19, cd-5 Rovno "Zhytomyr
16A oberdichev

sd - 6, td -4, md-2

Roskurov yVinnytsia

=

S K r. OTEPOV A KIA! /, yŷ

HUNGARY Debrecen

SYMBOLS

0 / grouping of troops according to the plan aa of troop action.

..." immediate task 1 y^ first strategic task

„ options for further action

1

in the western direction to defeat the large forces of the northern wing of the enemy front and capture the territory of former Poland and East Prussia; c) firmly defend the state border with Hungary and Romania and be ready to deliver concentric strikes against Romania from the Chernivtsi and Chisinau regions with the immediate goal of defeating the northern [northern] wing of the Romanian army and reaching the line of the river. Moldova, Iasi.

Thus, as rightly pointed out by S.N. Mikhalev, the May "plan was a somewhat transformed development laid down earlier" in the March plan?, and it was planned to ensure the achievement of the immediate strategic goals by offensive actions, primarily by the troops of the South-Western direction, where more than half of all divisions destined for operations in the West. To ensure a strong initial strike against the enemy, it was planned to deploy the main forces in the armies of the first echelon, which included most of the mobile formations.

Since the strategic deployment plan and the concept of the first strategic operations were designed for the complete mobilization of the Red Army, they were closely linked to the mobilization plan. In April 1940, the development of a new mobilization plan began, which was approved by the government on February 12, 1941. The mobilization deployment of the Red Army according to the MP-41 plan (officially called Mobplan No. 23) was supposed to lead to the creation of a wartime army. In total, it was planned to deploy 8 front and 29 army departments, 62 rifle departments, 29 mechanized, 4 cavalry, 5 airborne and 8 air corps, 177 rifle, 19 mountain rifle, 2 motorized rifle, 61 tank, 31 motorized, 13 cavalry and 79 aviation divisions, 3 rifle, 10 anti-tank artillery brigades and 72 artillery regiments of the RGK, as well as

the corresponding number of rear parts. After mobilization, the strength of the USSR Armed Forces should

118

was to be 8.9 million people, the troops were to have 106.7 thousand guns and mortars, up to 37 thousand tanks, 22.2 thousand combat aircraft, 10.7 thousand armored vehicles, about 91 thousand tractors and 595 thousand cars. |

Most of these troops had already been formed or were completing their formation, since, according to the system of mobilization deployment adopted in the summer of 1939, the number of units and formations was brought to the wartime level, which simplified the process of mobilization, reduced its time and. was supposed to contribute to a higher degree of combat effectiveness of the mobilized troops. The main "feature of military construction in these years was that there was a covert mobilization deployment of the armed forces." In the second half of 1940 — the first half of 1941 alone, 18 army directorates, 16 rifle corps directorates, 29 mechanized corps directorates, 5 airborne corps directorates, 86 rifle, 61 tank and 31 motorized divisions were formed, 2 rifle, 10 airborne and 10 anti-tank artillery brigades.

According to the MP-41 plan, the mobilization of the Red Army was planned to be carried out by echelon within a month. Depending on the situation, mobilization was planned to be carried out covertly or openly. The covert mobilization method was developed in detail. It was planned to mobilize the troops of the covering armies in two echelons. The first echelon, which included 114 divisions, fortified areas on the new border, 85% of the air defense forces, airborne troops, more than 75% of the air force and 34 artillery regiments of the RGK, was supposed to complete mobilization within 2-6 hours from the moment mobilization announcements. Reducing the mobilization period was achieved by calling up personnel and vehicles from nearby areas. The remaining troops of the border districts completed their mobilization on the 2nd-4th day of mobilization, using

119

written composition from all over the districts and from the interior of the country.

Other troops completed mobilization on the 8th-15th day, and spare parts and stationary hospitals - on the 16th-30th day. The mobilization of the Air Force was completed on the 3rd-4th day, and the combat units and the rear services serving them were brought to combat readiness already 2-4 hours after the start of mobilization. Air defense troops were mobilized in two echelons. The first had a constant readiness up to 2 hours, and the second was deployed on the 1st-2nd day of mobilization. The deployment of the newly formed units was supposed to be completed on the 3rd-5th day. Thus, out of 303 divisions of the Red Army, 172 had the terms of full readiness on the 2nd-4th day, 60 divisions - on the 4th-5th day, and the rest - on the 6th-10th day of mobilization. All other combat units, front-line rear areas and military educational institutions were mobilized on the 8th-15th day. The full mobilization of the armed forces was envisaged on the 15th-30th day, while the main part of the troops was deployed approximately on the 10th-15th day.

An important problem of the entry of the Red Army into the war was the issue of covering the mobilization, concentration and deployment of troops. Plans for covering the western border districts were developed in May-June 1941 on the basis of directives from the People's Commissar of Defense sent on May 5 to the command of the Zapovo and KOVO, on May 6 to the OdVO, and on May 14 to the LVO and Pribovoe. The planned grouping of troops of the western border districts for cover (see Table 5) included 15 armies, which included 107 divisions and 2 brigades, 51 divisions remained in the front reserve, and 8 divisions were at the disposal of the High Command. . According to V.A. Anfilova, B.N. Petrova and V.A. Semidetko, such a grouping was more adapted to the offensive than to defense, "which could not but affect in the event of an enemy attack, since,

as rightly pointed out by M.A. Gareev, "the disadvantageous position of the Soviet troops was aggravated by the fact that the troops

120

military districts had tasks not for defensive operations, but only for covering the deployment of troops"⁶⁵,

Table 5

PLANNED GROUPING OF THE DISTRICT TROOPS FOR COVER

LVO | PribOVO | ZapoOVO

County reserves

Reserve - High Command

Total sd - 17 | sd—17 | sd— 24 | td - 4 td - 4 td - 12 ppm - 2 | md - 2 md - 6

sb— 1 | sb -] cd - 2

Yu.A. Gorkov and Yu.N. Semin note that these documents "sin with formalism, the lack of an accurate assessment of the enemy, the definition of the balance of forces and means. Variants and methods of combat operations were not developed." The actions of the Air Force were planned in much more detail, which, according to the directives of the People's Commissar of Defense, were tasked with "active actions ... to gain air supremacy and powerful strikes on the main glands

121

road junctions, bridges, crossings and groupings of troops to disrupt and delay the concentration and deployment of enemy troops. From the first days of the war, air supremacy had to be won by "a sudden strike on enemy aircraft at its airfields and by inflicting maximum losses in air battles." It is clear that the most effective way to defeat enemy aircraft would be the first strike against its bases. Therefore, after the air forces of the districts "concentrate, and the enemy's airfield network is opened, it is necessary to proceed with the decisive destruction of enemy aircraft" and other objects in the 200-km border strip.

The introduction of these plans into action did not at all coincide with the attack of the enemy. So, they emphasize that "the first flight and border crossing by our units can be made only with the permission of the High Command." That is, the initiative for this action will come from Moscow. In the PribOVO cover plan, it was noted that "the purpose of reconnaissance is to reveal the enemy's intentions, his grouping and the timing of readiness to go on the offensive from the first day of the war." This once again confirms that the introduction of cover plans depended not on the actions of the enemy, but on the decision of the Soviet command. According to M.A. Gareeva, "on the eve of the war, at some point, the most important circumstance was lost sight of, that in the event of the outbreak of hostilities, both politically and militarily, one cannot proceed only from one's own wishes and motives, without taking into account that the enemy will strive to do everything in this way even when it is convenient and profitable for him", and "the idea of indispensably transferring the war from its very beginning to the territory of the enemy ... so captivated some leading military workers that the possibility of conducting military operations on its territory was practically excluded. Of course, this had a negative impact on the preparation of not

122

= · A bya 1 mk = draw Pribovo P 7 65 sk, 4.ik.28,171.191sd 1. about land Novgorod La 2. Number of divisions: | army echelon EP cover. sd.E: P echelon of covering armies. 12 divisions (sd-6, td-4, md-2); district reserve + sd.1, vdk.1. 3. Average operational density - 33 km per division | echelon. 4 Depth of defense . 100-126 km. 5. Time: defense exercises! divisions | echelon 13-16 h; deployment 12 IE MK - M, 22 SK. M0-M13, 24 SK-M2-M4, 29 SK · as mobilized (by decision of the commander of 11A).

Zapovo

ed 1. The width of the defense zone is 470 km. I. And 2. Number of divisions: | army echelon sd-10; 1 _ cover echelon of covering armies 13 divisions (SD-4, TD-8, MD-4, KD-2); district reserve 11 divisions {sd-5. td-4, md-2). 3. Average operational density - 47 km per division | echelon. 4. Depth of defense - 100-150 km. \$. Time; defense occupations by divisions | echelon - 3-18 hours; 42 sd - after 30 hours; divisions || echelon - 3 A: 86 sd - up to 24 hours, 24 sd - in the MZ up to 88 hours; 11 MKV M1 up to 4-11 h; 10A: 2 sd, 6 MKv M1 until 18:20 h, 6 KK-vM1-M2; 13 A: control A - M1 d068 h; 4A: 100 sd, 14 MK B M1 up to 6-11 hours; district reserve: 21 and 47 SK M4-M10, 17 and 20 MK. M3-M4.

kovo

1. The width of the defense zone - 960 ki.
2. Number of divisions: | echelon of covering armies - sd-17; echelon of covering armies - 13 divisions (TD-9, MD-4, CD-1); district reserve - 28 divisions (sd-16, td 3, md-4, cd-1).
3. Average operational density -60 km per division of the 1st echelon.
4. Depth of defense - 100-160 km.
- 5, 6, 12, 26 A, 7,31,35,37, | 5.Time of occupation of defense: divisions | 56 sk, 9, 16, 19, 24 microns, echelon - M1 from 3 to 19 hours, 44. 68, 164, 96 gsd - M1 M2; divisions |! echelon - AMK -7.9 chM1, Vi 16 MK kishod ML, 22 MK - MZ; district reserves - 15 and 24 MK up to 18 hMm1, 7, 31, 36, 55 SK, 6 KK - M4-M1b.

Odwo

ra 1. Width of the land defense zone HUNGARY x border - 460 km. e h } 2. Number of divisions: | army echelon

Debrecen 'cover -6 divisions (sd-4, cd-1); 1

5 \$ echelon of covering armies - sd-1; reserve to XX 0 district. 6 divisions(ed-2, td-2, md-1, cd-1). A

o 3. Average operational density -90 km

g x SE 57 per division | echelon. | 4. Defense depth "60.160 km. 5. Time: defense exercises by divisions | CONDITIONAL SIGNS \ I have an echelon. 4-70 h; access to areas | echelom of armies Zh se eosomdotevenia of the rest of the troops - cover): 1 echelon of armies

ROMANIA

only defense, but in general the theaters of military operations in the depths of their territory.

This conclusion is confirmed by the published documents on cover plans, which do not provide for serious opposition to the concentration of Soviet troops on the part of the enemy. Thus, according to plans, the full deployment of the troops of the border districts in the cover zones took up to 15 days, which, naturally, would be extremely difficult in the event of an enemy offensive. Moreover, in the event of an enemy attack, the troops of the first echelon would not have had time to occupy their defense lines on the border. As rightly noted by V.P. Krikunov, "a characteristic feature

cover plans consisted in the fact that they proceeded from such a variant of the beginning of the war and the situation created, in which it would be possible to advance to the border without interference from the potential enemy, occupy the designated cover zones, prepare to repel an attack, and mobilize ... A feature of all army cover plans was the lack of an assessment of the possible actions of the enemy, primarily the option of a sudden transition to the offensive of superior enemy forces ... The essence of a tactical maneuver was to quickly assemble and go to the border ... It was assumed that time would be given in the areas of concentration for the final preparation for battle""?.

If the covering forces really were preparing to repel enemy strikes, then this would "mean," according to M.A. Gareev, that the border military districts should have carefully developed plans for repelling the enemy invasion, that is, plans for defensive operations, since it is impossible to repel the offensive of superior enemy forces in passing, just as an intermediate task. This requires the conduct of a whole series of long-term fierce defensive battles and operations. If there were such plans, then in accordance with them, in a completely different way, namely, taking into account defensive tasks, the groups would be located

124

of the forces and means of these districts, management would be organized differently and the separation of material reserves and other mobilization resources would be carried out. Readiness to repel aggression also required that not only plans of operations be developed, but that these operations be prepared in full, including in logistical terms, so that they would be mastered by commanders and staffs. It is quite obvious that in the event of a surprise attack by the enemy, there is no time left for additional preparation of such operations. But this was not done in the border military districts."

Since the conduct of defensive operations was not envisaged, the troops of the first echelon of the covering armies received excessively wide cover strips on the border. So, in PribOVO, the division accounted for 33 km, in ZapOVO - 47 km, in KOVO - 50 km, in OdVO - 90 km. This was not envisaged by any norms, according to which the width of the division's defense front was to be 8-10 km. The lines of the armies averaged 170-176 km instead of 80-100 km according to pre-war views, the cover lines of the rifle corps were just as extended (84-92 km instead of the authorized 20-25 km). As noted by V.B. Makovsky, "the plans provided for a relatively uniform formation of the covering troops... Such a formation of the troops of the first strategic echelon in the event of a sudden attack by the enemy creates the conditions for their defeat in parts, as happened later", Naturally, that under these conditions "the ability of the covering armies to provide troops from a possible surprise attack by the enemy on an operational-strategic scale was doubtful, since the solution of this task should have been preceded by measures for the operational deployment of covering armies and engineering equipment of defensive lines" "5. Of course, the creation of rear defensive lines, envisaged by these plans, would have been impossible in the event of an enemy strike. Besides,

125

If the Soviet troops were really preparing to conduct defensive operations, it is not clear what prevented the creation of these lines, for example, in the spring of 1941.

It should not be forgotten that the planning of the operations of the western border districts to cover the mobilization, concentration and deployment of troops took place in accordance with the plan of May 15, 1941]. in order to protect ourselves from a possible surprise attack by the enemy, to cover the concentration and deployment of our troops and prepare them for going on the offensive" (emphasis mine. - M.M.). Therefore, it was necessary, firstly, "to organize a strong defense and cover of the state border, using for this all the troops of the border districts and almost all the aviation assigned to

deployment in the west", and secondly, "develop a detailed plan for the country's air defense and bring air defense systems to full readiness." According to the May directives of the People's Commissar of Defense, "the development of plans for the defense of the state border and air defense was completed by June 1, 1941, but later this deadline was pushed back, and the plans for covering the districts were submitted for approval to the General Staff on June 6–19, 1941. Since defensive operations were not planned, directives and cover plans contain the following: "Under favorable conditions, all the defending troops and reserves of the armies and the district should be ready, at the direction of the High Command, to deliver swift strikes to defeat enemy groupings, transferring combat operations to its territory and the capture of advantageous frontiers".

Setting the troops of the border districts the task of delivering strikes against the enemy, the Soviet military leadership had to order the preparation of these operations. This is confirmed by the above-mentioned directive of the People's Commissar of Defense and the Chief of the General Staff to the commander of the ZapOVO dated April 10, 1941, according to which, in accordance with the strategic plan, the North-Western Front was to "stubbornly

126

to cover the Riga and Kovno-Vilna directions with defense". The Southwestern Front was tasked with "strike by the armies of the right wing of the front, in cooperation with the left-flank army of the Western Front, to encircle and destroy the enemy grouping east of the river. Vistula", the boundary of which was supposed to be reached on the 10th day of the offensive.

The troops of the Western Front were to: "1. During the period of mobilization and concentration of troops - by stubborn defense, relying on fortified areas, to firmly cover our borders and prevent the enemy from invading our territory. 2. With the transition of the armies of the South-Western Front to the offensive, defeat the enemy's Lublin-Radom grouping with a blow from the left wing of the front. The immediate task of the front is to capture the area of Sedlec, Lukov and capture the crossings across the river. Vistula; in the future, to keep in mind actions on Radom with the aim of completely encircling the enemy's Lublin grouping, in cooperation with the Southwestern Front. 3. To ensure the main attack of the front, launch an auxiliary attack in the direction of Warsaw, with the task of capturing Warsaw and carrying out the defense of the bank. Narew. 4. The stubborn defense of the armies of the right wing of the front in the sector of the river. Neman, Shchuchin, Ostrolenka firmly cover the Lida and Volkovysk-Baranoviche directions.

The corresponding tasks were also assigned to the armies of the Western Front. So, the 3rd Army was supposed to be "defense on the front of the river. Neman, Shchuchin, Kolno firmly cover Grodno and directions to Lida and to Bialystok and Volkovysk. The 10th Army followed "strong defense of the front claim. Kolno, Novogrudok to the river. Bug, cover the Bialystok direction. With the advance of the left-flank armies of the front to the river. Vistula, take out the defense of the left wing of the army on the river. Narew and secure its eastern bank behind itself. The 13th Army received the task "simultaneously with the 4th Army of the Front to strike with the forces of at least seven rifle divisions and two mechanized corps in the direction of Kossov, Volomin, with the goal of reaching the river. Vistula to ensure the attack of the 4th Army on Sedlec, Lublin from the north; V

127

in the future, by actions from the north, strive to capture Warsaw, the actions of mechanized corps, with access to the river. Vistula, move south to assist the 4th Army. In turn, the 4th Army was supposed to, "strike in the direction of Drokhichin, Siedlce (Sedlec), Garvolin, force the river. Bug, to break the opposing enemy and seize the moving parts - on the 3rd day of the Sedlec operation and on the 5th day of the operation, crossings on the river. Vistula, the main forces on the 8th day to reach the river. Vistula, in readiness to force it. In the future, keep in mind the actions on Radom.

At the same time, it was necessary, "taking into account the possibility of the enemy going on the offensive before the end of our concentration, to organize the cover of the border on the front of all armies according to the type of solid defense, gradually increasing as the troops arrive, with the full use of fortified areas and field fortifications. , with their comprehensive development during the period

concentration". It is clear that the cover plan was to be put into action not as a result of the actions of the enemy, but on orders from Moscow. Naturally, the directive stated that "the first flight and crossing of the state border is allowed only with the special permission of the High Command", and it was required to develop "a plan for the implementation of the first operation of the 13th and 4th armies and a defense plan for the 3rd and 10th Army". As evidenced by A.M. Vasilevsky, "a few weeks before the attack on us by fascist Germany... all the documentation on the district operational plans was handed over by the General Staff to the command and headquarters of the respective districts." All this once again points to the inadmissibility of mixing cover plans with the operational plans of the border military districts, which are still secret.

At present, only a few documents of military planning in the western border districts are known. At the end of 1940, the chief of staff of the KOVO prepared a plan of military operations for the troops of the district in accordance with the general strategic plan. Naturally, damn

128

The most important strategic task of the troops of the Southwestern Front was "to defeat, in cooperation with the 4th Army of the Western Front, the German armed forces in the regions of Lublin, Tomaszow, Kielce, Radom and Rzeszow, Jaslo, Krakow and exit on the 30th day of the operation to the front of Pilitsa, Petrokov, Oppeln, Neustadt, cutting off Germany from her southern allies. At the same time, secure the state border with Hungary and Romania. The immediate task is to encircle and destroy the enemy east of the river in cooperation with the 4th Army of the Western Front. Vistula and on the 10th day of the operation reach the river. Vistula and develop the offensive in the direction of Kielce, Petrokow and Krakow. Accordingly, the Western Front had the task of "strike the left-flank 4th Army in the direction of Drogichin, Sedlec, Demblin to assist the Southwestern Front in defeating the enemy's Lublin grouping and, on the 15th day of the operation, reach the river. Wisla. In the future, attack Radom. The operation of the Southwestern Front was divided into three stages. The first stage was "defense at a fortified line along the state border line" with the task of "preventing the enemy from invading Soviet territory, and destroying the intruder and ensuring the concentration and deployment of front armies for the offensive", that is, a cover operation. The second stage was an offensive to carry out the immediate task of the front to a depth of 120-130 km. Moreover, it was envisaged "the start of the offensive from the morning of the 30th day of mobilization", and not "30 days after the enemy attack", as Yu.A. Gorkov, who quoted the above phrase in one of his works. The third stage of the operation was "the completion of the immediate strategic task of the front" to a depth of up to 250 km, which took 20 days. In this case, the main blow was delivered by the forces of the 6th, 12th, 26th and Konno mechanized armies in the direction of the Katowice-Krakow region. The remaining armies of the front provided this offensive from the Warsaw-Lodz front and along the borders of the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania,

5 A. Isaev 129

where a new front was to be created. "During the defeat of the main enemy forces east of the river. The Vistula front proceeds to pursue the main forces in the general direction towards the Katowice-Krakow region. In the first echelon of the front, mobile units. Rifle formations reinforced with tanks and artillery, in turn, advance in the second echelons, ready to repel counterattacks and break attempts at resistance.

The plan outlined in detail the tasks of the armies of the front. So, the 5th Army was supposed to "force the river. Bug, defeat the opposing enemy and reach the front by the end of the 3rd day - Michelsdorf, st. Zavaduvka, st. Wojslovice, capture Lublin with mobile units. Later, advancing in the general direction through Lublin, on the 10th day reach the river. Wisla". The 19th Army should "with the beginning of the offensive of the main forces of the front strike in the direction of Tomaszow, Zamostye. Using the success of the 5th and 6th armies, on the 12th day of the operation, reach the river. Vistula on the section of Solec, Zavihost. The troops of the 6th Army were ordered to "break through the enemy's front with a blow to Tarnograd, let the Cavalry-Mechanized Army into the gap. By the end of the 3rd day

operations to capture the northern exits from the Tanev forests in the Bilgorai region and the Yezhev region. With mobile units, capture the crossing at Sandomierz, on the 10th day of the operation, reach the river. Wisla". The 26th Army was to "force the river. San and, striking on both flanks in the general direction of Rzeszow, by the end of the 3rd day of the operation, capture Rzeszow and the border of the river. Wisłoka, and capture the crossings over the Vistula and Dunajec with moving units. In the future, advancing through Radomysl, on the 10th day of the operation, go to the front of Shchutsin, Opatovets, Tarnow. The 12th Army was supposed to "provide the strike group of the front from the south from Hungary and Slovakia, for which, delivering the main blow in the direction of Krosno, Jaslo, defeat the opposing enemy and reach the Krosno area on the 3rd day, and on the 10th the day of the operation to go to the front Tarnow, Grybow. The 18th and 9th armies received the task of covering the border with Hungary and Rum.

130

niei and be ready to respond to Romania's entry into the war. In particular, the 9th Army was supposed to "immediately strike through Tulcea on Medzhidiv and Constanta to occupy Northern Dobruja and reach the border with Bulgaria, cutting off Romania from the sea"! As you can see, the available documents somehow do not quite correspond to the version about the defensive preparations of the USSR.

The military planning documents cited above give a fairly complete picture of the development of the views of the Soviet leadership on the way the Soviet Union would enter the war with Germany; that the Soviet side was not going to give the enemy the initiative to start hostilities. In addition, it should not be forgotten that all these plans did not remain on paper, as the process of preparing for their implementation gradually gained momentum. This can be especially clearly seen in the example of the document dated May 15, 1941, which the Red Army was to be guided by at the beginning of the war. After outlining the general tasks of the fronts, it says the following: "In order to ensure the fulfillment of the plan outlined above, it is necessary to carry out the following measures in advance, without which it is impossible to deliver a surprise strike against the enemy (emphasized by me. — M.M.) both from the air and on the ground:

1. to carry out covert mobilization of troops under the guise of reserve training camps;
 2. under the guise of an exit to the camps, to carry out a covert concentration of troops closer to the western border, first of all, to concentrate all the armies of the reserve of the High Command;
 3. covertly concentrate aviation on field airfields from remote districts and immediately begin to deploy aviation rear;
 4. gradually, under the guise of training camps and rear exercises, deploy the rear and the hospital base.
- The military leadership asked "to allow the consistent conduct of covert mobilization and covert

131

concentration in the first place of all the armies of the reserve of the High Command and aviation"?2.

All the proposed measures were immediately implemented.

On point 1. As early as March 8, 1941, the Politburo of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks approved the Decree of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR No. 484-203ss, according to which it was envisaged in 1941 to call up 975,870 conscripts under the guise of "big training camps" for training camps. The implementation of these measures in late May - early June 1941 made it possible to call up 805.2 thousand people (24% of assigned personnel according to the mobilization plan). This made it possible to reinforce 99 rifle divisions both in the western border districts and those advanced from the internal districts: 21 divisions were brought up to 14,000 men; 72 divisions - up to 12 thousand people and 6 divisions - up to 11 thousand people with a wartime staff of 14,483 people. At the same time, units and formations of other military branches were replenished with personnel, and the troops received 26,620 horses⁸³.

On point 2. In the period from May 13 to May 22, 1941, four armies (16th, 19th, 21st and 22nd) begin to advance to the western border and three more armies are preparing to advance armies (20th, 24th and 28th), which were supposed to complete the concentration by July 10th. In total, 71 divisions (55 rifle, 11 tank and 5 motorized) divisions were planned to be deployed to the Western theater of operations, of which 20 rifle divisions of the 20th and 21st armies were to become part of the Southwestern Front. The 16th and 19th armies of the RGK, consisting of 23 divisions (16 rifle, 5 tank and 2 motorized) concentrated on the South-Western, and the 22nd army of the RGK, consisting of 9 divisions (6 rifle, 2 tank and 1 motorized) — in Western directions. The 28th and 24th central armies of the RGK, consisting of 19 divisions (13 rifle, 4 tank and 2 motorized) deployed in the Rzhev and Sukhinichi-Bryansk regions, respectively. "This redeployment from the inner districts, in fact, was the beginning of the strategic concentration

132

Soviet troops in theaters of operations. The advance was carried out under the strictest camouflage measures, with great care, gradually, without increasing the normal schedule of the railways." On June 12-18, 1941, the General Staff ordered the headquarters of the western districts to begin, under the guise of exercises and changing the location of summer camps, a covert advance of troops of the second echelon of the covering armies and reserves of the western border military districts (a total of 114 divisions), which were supposed to occupy July 1 concentration areas 20-80 km from the border. This, by the way, refutes the widespread assertions that "all preparations for war on the ground were stopped from above."

On point 3. Information about the concentration of aviation is very scarce. Nevertheless, it is known that on May 1, 1941, in the western military districts there were 57 fighter, 48 bomber, 7 reconnaissance and 5 assault aviation regiments, in which there were 6980 aircraft. By June 1, 2 more attack air regiments arrived and the number of aircraft increased to 7009, and by June 22 in the western districts there were 64 fighter, 50 bomber, 7 reconnaissance and 9 attack air regiments, in which there were 7628 aircraft. In addition, by June 22, 1941, there were four long-range bomber corps and one long-range bomber division in the Western theater of operations, in which there were 1346 aircraft. According to the Decree of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR and the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks No. 862-369ss of April 10, 1941, the transition to a new system of aviation rear services, autonomous from combat units of the Air Force, began. This system ensured freedom of maneuver for combat units, freed them from redeploying their rear behind them, and maintained constant readiness to receive aircraft and ensure their combat activities. The transition to this system was to be completed by July 1, 1941 # 6

Regarding item 4. Until June 22, no data was published on the deployment of rear and hospital units. On the eve of the war, the rear units were kept

133

reduced staff and were to be deployed: army - on the 5-7th day, front-line - on the 15th day of mobilization. It is known that 41% of the stationary warehouses and bases of the Red Army were located in the western districts, many of them were located in the 200-kilometer border strip? Significant stocks were accumulated in these warehouses. As A.G. Khorkov, "district warehouses, having a design capacity of 91,205 wagons, were loaded with 93,415 wagons. In addition, 14,400 wagons of ammunition and 4,370 wagons of equipment and weapons were stored in the open air in the districts." In June 1941, the General Staff proposed to transfer more than 100,000 tons of fuel to the western districts. According to the directive of the General Staff No. 560944 of June 1, 1941, all border districts had to submit an application by July 10 "for the required amount of food and fodder ... in the 1st month of wartime"®. All this, according to G.P. Pastukhovsky, was preparation "to ensure deep offensive operations"?!. As noted in a study of the state of the rear of the Red Army, "with a front-line offensive operation depth of 250 km, an offensive rate of 15 km per day and timely recovery

railways had every opportunity to ensure the first operation with stocks created in peacetime in the army rear"??.

Of course, the main process that makes it possible to speak of the completion of preparations for the implementation of the plan of May 15, 1941, is the strategic concentration and deployment of the Red Army. As is known, "the last six months before the start of the war were already directly connected with the covert strategic deployment of troops, which was supposed to constitute the final stage of preparation" for war³. But it was from April 1941 that a full-scale process of focusing on the future of the theater of operations of the 240 divisions allocated for the war with Germany, which accounted for 79.2% of the available forces of the Red Army, began, which, after mobilization, would have counted over 6 million people, about 70 thousand yell

134

mortars and over 15,000 tanks and up to 12,000 aircraft. Strategic deployment was motivated by "the desire to pre-empt one's adversaries in deploying armed forces to deliver the first strikes with larger forces and seize the strategic initiative from the very beginning of hostilities." It is clear that these measures were carried out in the strictest secrecy and an all-encompassing disinformation campaign against the German leadership, which, in particular, was inspired that the main efforts of the Soviet troops in the event of war would be directed to East Prussia.

Since the strategic concentration and deployment of troops is the final stage of preparation for war, the question of determining the possible timing of a Soviet attack on Germany is of particular interest. In Russian historiography, this topic began to be discussed with the publication of the infamous work by V. Suvorov "Icebreaker", which names the "exact" date of the planned Soviet attack on Germany - July 6, 1941, which is in fact unsubstantiated. The author's motivation boils down mainly to the fact that July 6, 1941 was a Sunday, while Stalin and Zhukov allegedly liked to attack on Sunday. But it can hardly be taken seriously. The author's assumptions are not supported by the quote from the book "The Initial Period of the War", the meaning of which is distorted by him. This book says that "the German fascist command (and not the 'German troops', as in Suvorov's — M. M.) literally in the last two weeks before the war (that is, from June 8 to June 22, and not "for two weeks," as in "Icebreaker" - M.M.) managed to forestall our troops in completing their deployment and thereby create favorable conditions for seizing the strategic initiative at the start of the war?' Moreover, this quote by Suvorov is given twice: once correctly, and the second time - distorted*.

As noted above, the attack on Germany was originally planned for June 12, 1941.

135

Dimo, it is no coincidence that the order of the People's Commissar of Defense No. 138 of March 15, 1941, which put into effect the "Regulations on the personal accounting of losses and the burial of the dead personnel of the Red Army in wartime", demanded "to supply the troops with medallions by May 1, 1941 and leaflets on wartime states"??.

However, as is known, on June 12, no hostile actions were taken against Germany by the USSR. It is not possible to unequivocally answer the question about the reasons for postponing this period due to the state of the source base. We can only make some assumptions about this. "I don't remember all the motives for canceling such a decision," Molotov recalled 40 years later. - But it seems to me that the flight to England of Hitler's deputy for the party, Rudolf Hess, played a major role here. Intelligence of the NKVD reported to us that Hess, on behalf of Hitler, offered Great Britain to make peace and take part in a military campaign against the USSR... unleashed a war against Germany, moving their troops to Europe, then England would immediately enter into an alliance with Germany ... And not only England. We could find ourselves one on one in the face of the entire capitalist world..."¹⁰⁰. Fearing a possible end to the Anglo-German war, the Kremlin considered it necessary to delay the attack on Germany.

Only after receiving information about the failure of the Hess mission and being convinced of the continuation of the Anglo-German military operations in the Eastern Mediterranean, in Moscow, apparently, they decided not to postpone the implementation of their plans any longer. As already noted, on May 24, 1941, a completely secret meeting of the military-political leadership took place in Stalin's office in the Kremlin, at which, probably, the issue of a new deadline for completing military preparations was decided. Unfortunately, in such a serious matter, we are forced to confine ourselves to this working hypothesis, which has yet to be confirmed or tested.

136

overthrow on the basis of attracting new, as yet inaccessible documents.

Was there an exact date planned at all? Only a comprehensive study of documents reflecting both the process of military planning and the conduct of measures to prepare for an offensive will make it possible to give a final answer to this question. At the same time, the timing of these events known to historians does not exclude the possibility that such a date was nevertheless determined. According to V.N. Kiseleva, V.D. Danilov and P.N. Bobylev, the offensive of the Red Army was possible in July 1941¹⁰!. Available documents reflecting the process of preparing the Red Army for war indicate that most of the measures to increase the combat readiness of the troops of the western border districts were to be completed by July 1, 1941. By this day, it was planned to complete the formation of all deployments. mymyh in these districts of parts; arm the tank regiments of the mechanized corps, which lacked tanks, with anti-tank artillery; complete the transition to a new organization of aviation logistics, autonomous from combat units; to concentrate troops of the districts in the border areas; camouflage airfields and military equipment.

At the same time, the concentration and deployment of the second strategic echelon of the Red Army was being completed. So, the troops of the 21st Army completed their concentration on July 2, the 22nd Army - by July 3, the 20th Army - by July 5, the 19th Army - by July 7, the 16th, 24th and 28th th Army - by July 10. Based on the fact that "the enemy preempted the Soviet troops in their deployment by about 25 days", the full concentration and deployment of the Red Army in the Western theater of operations was to be completed by July 15, 1941. By July 5, the organization of false airfields in 500 -kilometer border strip. By July 15, it was planned to complete the construction of air defense facilities in Kyiv and the camouflage of warehouses, workshops and other military facilities in the border zone, as well as to supply all available weapons to the constructed structures.

137

fortifications on the new border! ?. Thus, as follows from the known materials, the Red Army should have completed preparations for the offensive no earlier than July 15, 1941. At the same time, clarifying the issue of the planned date of the Soviet attack on Germany requires further research with the involvement of new documentary material. . The available materials allow us to make an assumption about the sequence of the final preparations of the Soviet troops for war. Early in the morning of June 18, 1941, the Chief of the General Staff of the Red Army sent an order to the command of the western border districts to put the troops on combat readiness by July 1¹³. Most likely, | On July 15, the troops of the western districts would receive an order to put into action cover plans, a new stage of covert mobilization would begin in the country, and the completion by July 15 of the deployment of the planned Red Army grouping in the Western theater of operations would allow the USSR to begin combat operations at any time after this date. action against Germany. The impossibility of completely keeping Soviet military preparations secret did not allow for a long delay in striking Germany, otherwise the German side would have learned about them. Therefore, the completion of the concentration and deployment of the Red Army on the western border of the USSR should have served as a signal for an immediate attack on Germany. Only in this case would it be possible to keep these preparations secret and take the enemy by surprise. At the same time, when analyzing the preparation of the Soviet Union for war with Germany, it should be remembered that we are examining an unfinished process. Therefore, conclusions regarding the actual intentions

of the Soviet leadership are largely conjectural in nature. After all, as far as is known, despite the preparations for war with Germany, the Kremlin, right up to June 22, 1941, did not decide on the use of military force to defend its interests. Of course, further declassification and introduction into scientific circulation of materials of the latest

138

months before the German attack will probably make it possible to more accurately reconstruct the planned actions of the Soviet leadership. However, it is quite probable that on some aspects of this problem it will never be possible to obtain an unambiguous answer. |

However, the picture will be incomplete if we do not try, at least hypothetically, to imagine how events could develop if the Soviet leadership carried out its original plan and on June 12, 1941, struck Germany. At that time, German troops were completing preparations for Operation Barbarossa and concentrating near the Soviet borders, where 81.6% of the divisions that were planned to be deployed to the evening of June 21! On June 10, divisions of the first echelon began to secretly withdraw into the 30-km border zone. The rest of the troops were either on the move to the East, or were waiting for their turn to be transferred in the camps. The Luftwaffe was also completing its redeployment after the Balkan campaign. The Wehrmacht had neither a defensive nor an offensive grouping, and a Soviet attack at that moment would put it in a very difficult position, which made it possible to smash its forces piece by piece.

In accordance with the Soviet operational plan, the main events were to unfold on the front from Ostrolenka to the Carpathians, where the troops of the Southwestern and left wing of the Western Fronts dealt the main blow to the enemy troops. The ratio of forces of the parties on the Ostroleka-Karpaty front is indicated in Table 6, the data of which indicate that the Soviet troops had forces capable of ensuring the fulfillment of the tasks assigned to them. The troops of the North-Western and right wing of the Western Fronts were to tie down the German troops deployed in East Prussia and occupy the Suwalki ledge and the Memel region in private offensive operations. The troops of the Northern Front were preparing for an offensive in Finland, and those of the Southern Front in Romania. However

139

The primary measures were the actions of the Red Army on the Soviet-German border from the Baltic to the Carpathians.

Table 6 Red Army Wehrmacht Ratio

Divisions 128 2.3:1 Personnel (millions) 21:1 Guns and mortars 16.3 2.4:1 (thousands) Tanks (thousands) PE: 08 IE II 8.7:1 Aircraft (thousands) 6.2 1.4 4.4: 1 p

Hostilities would begin with a surprise strike by most of the Soviet Air Force on enemy airfields in East Prussia, Poland and Romania. The general Soviet superiority in aviation made it possible to subject the Luftwaffe airfields in the 250 km border strip to many hours of continuous air assault, which would lead to a significant weakening of the enemy air force and would facilitate the operations of the Red Army ground forces. The range of the Soviet Air Force made it possible to provide reliable fighter cover for bombing operations in the 350 km zone. If necessary, the zone of guaranteed air impact could be increased to 500 km using the latest MiG-3 aircraft. The losses of Soviet aviation could be made up fairly quickly by redeploying flight formations from internal military districts, which made it possible to use more than 2,300 aircraft. It was much more difficult to make up for the losses of the Luftwaffe, since they were involved in different fronts. On the territory of Germany, the air defense forces had only 282 aircraft. The German Air Force in Western Europe (861 aircraft) were connected by the reflection of the British

raids, and in the Mediterranean Sea (423 aircraft) ensured the actions of the German-Italian troops in Libya! . Such a deployment of German aviation gave the Soviet Air Force a certain prospect of gaining air supremacy. |

A strike against the Wehrmacht at dawn on June 12, 1941, when the German troops were completing their concentration and deployment, would have made it possible to take the enemy, who had no plans for defensive actions, by surprise in a grouping completely unsuited to defense. A blow from the southwestern and left flanks of the Western Fronts would have hit 55 enemy divisions, immediately pinning down 55.6% of the troops deployed in the East, which would have made counteractions much more difficult. Using the configuration of the border, the Red Army would conduct operations to envelop and encircle enemy troops, the outcome of which would be decided by the ability of the parties to build up their forces. In the strip from Przemyśl to the Carpathians against the 2 infantry, 2 light infantry and 2 security divisions of the Wehrmacht deployed there, the Soviet command would deploy at least 28 divisions (of which 6 tank and 3 motorized), which opened the way for the Soviet troops to Sandomierz and via Tarnów to Kraków. This breakthrough would divert additional Wehrmacht forces, which would probably have to create a new front west of the Vistula, where the main battles would unfold.

The Soviet command could use 24 divisions deployed in the rear of the Southwestern Front, as well as another 15 divisions of the High Command reserve, which could be used in southern Poland or the Balkans, to build up the strike in the South-Western direction. The German command could initially use 22 divisions to repel a sudden attack (of which 6 were security divisions, not suitable for operations at the front), which did not have time to deploy on the Soviet border, and 26 divisions of the OKH reserve, of which almost immediately it was possible to start transfer to the front of 14 divisions, which, according to the original plan,

the command of the mansky command were to be sent to the front by 4 July 1941. The remaining 12 divisions (of which 2 were tank divisions) would have to be hastily prepared for redeployment, while it should be taken into account that the 2nd tank division was only at the beginning arrived in the central regions of Germany on vacation after the fighting in the Balkans and did not have time to make up for the losses incurred, and the 5th Panzer Division was in the process of redeployment from Greece to Germany. In addition, the transfer of these troops to the front would be hampered by the influence of the Soviet Air Force on the railways. In addition, the German command could try to transfer 5-6 infantry divisions from East Prussia, which would have been difficult as a result of the actions of the troops of the North-Western and right wing of the Western fronts and the significant influence of the Soviet Air Force.

The development of the offensive of the Red Army in southeastern Poland made it possible for the troops of the Southern Front to go over to the offensive in Rumania without fear of being struck from the rear. There were only 6 divisions of the Wehrmacht in Romania, and the Romanian army was not a serious enemy, which doomed the attack of the Southern Front to success. The defeat of the northern flank of the enemy front opened the way for the Red Army to the central regions of Romania and threatened Germany's dominance in the Balkans. The German command simply had nothing to fend off this threat: 10-12 German divisions scattered across the territory of Yugoslavia and Greece could not delay the advance of the Soviet troops for a long time. The breakthrough of the Red Army into Romania would most likely have spurred on the national liberation movement in the Balkans and, above all, in Yugoslavia, which would have further complicated the position of the German troops stationed there. The need to plug the gap in the Balkans would force the German command to transfer there part of the troops from those 24 divisions that were in reserve, which would further weaken the front.

Of the 38 German divisions serving in Western Europe, it was possible to use

there were only 14 at the front, which still had to be prepared for transfer to the East. The use of the remaining 24 divisions was difficult because they were mostly stationary formations that did not have the necessary vehicles, were kept on reduced staff and had a limited set of heavy weapons!%. Of course, it was possible to bring two divisions into one more full-blooded one, but this required considerable time, which also played into the hands of the Red Army. In addition, it was necessary to take into account the need to maintain a sufficient number of troops to maintain the occupation regime and repel possible British landings.

Germany simply did not have the forces capable of repelling the sudden blow of the Red Army. This was recognized after the war by the Chief of Staff of the Supreme High Command of the Wehrmacht, Field Marshal W. Keitel, who believed that the Soviet attack on Germany in 1941 could "put us in an exceptionally critical position in strategic and economic terms." . [...] In the very first weeks, an attack by Russia would put Germany in extremely disadvantageous conditions! 7.

Of course, one should not consider the military operations of the Soviet troops in the event of a surprise strike against Germany as a "walk to Berlin." Undoubtedly, it would be a hard, bloody struggle against a serious adversary. However, the force and inertia of a sudden strike would have made it possible for the Red Army, if not to crush, then to significantly weaken the German formations on the Ostroleka-Karpaty front. In the most favorable course of events, the troops of the Western and Southwestern fronts would have been able to fulfill the main task and would have reached the Ostroleka-Warsaw-Lodz-Oppeln-Olomouc front. The least favorable result of the offensive of the Soviet troops could be the stabilization of the front along the Narew and Vistula rivers, that is, approximately where the Soviet-German front stabilized at the end of 1944. In the Balkans, one hundred

143

In general, the German command had nothing to bilize the front, and the depth of the advance of the Red Army would be limited only by the inertia of the strike.

It is quite obvious that this offensive by the Red Army would not have led to an immediate decision on the outcome of the war, but a Soviet attack would have led to the disruption of the German invasion of the USSR and would have facilitated victory in the war, saving our country millions of lives and significant material values. . The Red Army could have been in Berlin no later than 1942, which would have allowed Moscow to control a much larger territory in Europe than happened in 1945. The defeat of Germany and the Sovietization of Europe allowed Moscow to use its scientific and technical potential , opened the way to a "just social reorganization" of the European colonies in Asia and Africa. Created within the framework of the Old World, the socialist camp would control most of the Earth's resources. Accordingly, even if the New World had not been conquered, it would most likely not have been able to significantly surpass the Old World in terms of living standards. As a result, a significant number of dissatisfied people would remain there, looking with hope for help from across the ocean. In the case of the complete coverage of the Earth by the socialist system, the task of creating a single state of Mankind, formulated in the liberal European tradition, would be fully realized. This, in turn, made it possible to create a fairly stable social system and would provide great opportunities for development. Today it is quite obvious that the creation of such a State on the basis of the Russian Soviet tradition of unity and equality of different peoples was much more in the interests of the vast majority of mankind than the real. the model of the "new world order", which is currently racist in its essence, to ensure the interests of the "golden billion"!68.

Naturally, the question arises as to how England and the United States would react to the Soviet attack on Germany.

144

nyu? The opinion of the official Russian historiography was expressed by M.A. Gareev, who argues that in this case "the Soviet Union would appear before the whole world as an aggressor, and in the same England the forces advocating an alliance with Germany could prevail"!9. However, this approach completely ignores both the centuries-old tradition of military-political actions in such a situation and the real policy of England in 1939-1941. The entire military history of mankind testifies that the intervention of a third country in a war between two states has never led to an immediate unity of the belligerent countries against it. In addition, it is not clear what could have prompted England to break this pattern? If we turn to the real policy of England at the beginning of the Second World War, then it is impossible to deny the generally recognized fact that she alone could not win the war with Germany. That is why in 1939-1940. England tried in every possible way to preserve and expand her alliance with France by including other European countries in it. Since the summer of 1940, after the defeat and capitulation of France, the British leadership made a bet on the possible involvement of the United States in the war with Germany and the deterioration of Soviet-German relations: this could lead to a war in Eastern Europe, or at least to the fact that Germany would have been forced to keep an impressive military grouping there, which ruled out its use against England.

Known materials show that the British leadership actively sought to put both of these possibilities into practice. By the beginning of 1941, he managed to enlist the material support of the United States. In relation to the USSR, the policy of England was to force the Soviet leadership to take a less favorable position towards Germany. To do this, information about the threat to the USSR in the event of a German victory was constantly and methodically transmitted to Moscow. In the spring of 1941, England's attempts to drag the USSR into the war began to take on the character of blackmail: if Moscow did not join

145

into the war, then London will be forced to make an agreement with Germany, which as a result of this will be able to carry out Orgpas Osen. When, in early June 1941, British intelligence concluded that the concentration of the Wehrmacht near the Soviet borders indicated that Germany was preparing to put pressure on the USSR to meet economic and even political demands, London, interested in an uncompromising position of Moscow, decided to prepare an operation to launch an airstrike on Baku oil refineries. This would make it possible to put pressure on the USSR so that it would not yield to German demands. At the same time, England through diplomatic channels promised Moscow its assistance in the event of a war with Germany. On the other hand, information about the intentions and actions of the USSR threatening Germany was transmitted to Berlin through various channels. Therefore, it seems absolutely unbelievable that England, in every possible way interested in the outbreak of a Soviet-German war, would suddenly immediately rush to the aid of Germany.

Proceeding from these goals, on June 15, 1941, Churchill telegraphed US President F. Roosevelt, informing him of the possibility of a German attack on the USSR encouragement and help, based on the principle that the enemy we need to defeat is Hitler!" 1. It should be noted here: at that moment, no one was completely sure that Germany would nevertheless attack the USSR, and could not predict exactly what turn the events on the Soviet-German front would take. On June 21, Roosevelt replied that he supported this position of Churchill and that the USA would render "Russia all possible assistance"!!. According to Churchill's personal secretary, Colville, on the afternoon of June 21, he discussed his position with the Prime Minister and asked: "Would this not be a departure from principle for him, the worst enemy of the Communists?" "Not at all," replied Churchill. - I have only one

146

the goal is to destroy Hitler, and this greatly simplifies my life. If Hitler invaded hell, I would at least speak favorably of Satan in the House of Commons!?. Churchill repeated the same position in his famous speech on the radio on the evening of 22 June. "Nazi

the regime has the worst features of communism," he said. — ...Over the past 25 years, no one has been a more consistent opponent of communism than me. I won't take back a single word I said about him." Nevertheless, the main threat to England at the present time is represented by Hitler and his regime, which "we are determined to destroy", therefore "any person or state that fights against Nazism will receive our help"! 3.

All this once again confirms that the main goal for the British leadership was to win the war with Germany with the help of anyone, and in principle it was completely indifferent to how exactly the Soviet-German war would begin. The same can be said about the USA, which in the first half of 1941 was increasingly drawn into an undeclared war with Germany. At the secret Anglo-American negotiations of January 21-March 29, 1941, it was decided that Germany was the main adversary, and a general strategy for the war with her was formulated. Simultaneously, on March 11, the US Congress passed the Lend-Lease Act, which gives the President the right to provide military and other assistance to any country whose defense was considered vital to US security. On March 24, England was given the opportunity to repair its warships at American shipyards. On March 30, all German and Italian ships that were in American ports were seized by the United States and after some time transferred to England. On April 10, Roosevelt declared the Red Sea a "non-military zone", which allowed the American merchant fleet to supply the British troops in North Africa without hindrance. On April 13, American troops began to deploy to bases in Greenland. April 24 "safe zone

147

the United States in the Atlantic Ocean has been extended to 30 degrees west longitude. On May 27, Roosevelt declared an "unrestricted state of emergency" in the United States. On June 14, German and Italian property on American soil was "frozen" (that is, actually seized). On June 16, all German consulates and offices of various German agencies operating in the USA were closed. Naturally, Washington did not even think about any military assistance to Germany in the event of a Soviet attack. This would be completely contrary to US policy, not to mention the fact that there was influential opposition there to the course of bringing the country into the war, and, as you know, the Roosevelt administration had to make a lot of efforts to provoke Japan to attack, which allowed the US to enter into World War II. Already on June 23, 1941, when no one could have known that events on the Soviet-German front would take such a hard turn for the Red Army, the US State Department issued an official statement condemning the "principles and doctrine" of communism, but emphasizing the danger of German expansion, which "at present most affects our own national defense and the security of the New World where we live. Therefore, in the opinion of our government, any defense against Hitlerism, any unification of the forces opposing Hitlerism, whatever their origin, will hasten the overthrow of the present German leaders and thereby serve our own defense and security." On the same day, Missouri Senator G. Truman (future US President) quite frankly expressed the opinion of the ruling elite: "If we see that Germany is winning, then we should help Russia, and if Russia wins, then we should help Germany, and thus let them kill as many as possible, although I do not want Hitler's victory under any

148

The Soviet-German war was regarded as a favorable factor that reduced the danger of German expansion for the United States itself.

Table 7 ARMED FORCES OF THE GREAT POWERS IN JUNE 1941116

Herma- | ussr | Japan | USA

you me

? Personnel 3766 2870 8 229 5774.2 2142 2101.2 Composition (thousands) Guns and About | Around | 88 251 117 581 | Over | Near. mortars | 24600 18400 13500 14700

Tanks Ok. 3200 | OK. 2000 E 25 | 25786 (c. 3500. 3500 | c. 1500

Aircraft | OK. 5700 | OK. 3000 ne 1 24488 |About 4800| 6777

Naval Forces

a Ge GG and Ze

Linear e

cruisers

aircraftos

TSY

England | Italy

heavy cruisers

Light 54 13 4 7 19 19 cruisers

Submarines 54 93 158 212 60 113 |

149

Thus, in the summer of 1941, there was a favorable opportunity for the Soviet Union to launch a surprise attack on Germany, which was fettered by the war with England, and to obtain at least the benevolent neutrality of London and Washington (and most likely, their help, albeit limited). Of course, as the Red Army advanced deeper into Europe, these sentiments could change, but it would have been too late: Germany would have been on the verge of defeat. England and the USA simply would not have been able to provide real support in the war with the USSR. The United States had no ground forces at all that could be sent to Europe, and British troops were too dispersed: from the British Isles to the Far East. It took too much time to transfer to Europe a grouping of British troops sufficient for defense against the Red Army. In any case, the opposition of the Red Army, liberating Europe from fascism, would hardly have been a very popular measure in England. If we take into account the long-term goals of the foreign policy of both the United States and Britain, in whose interests was the clash between Germany and the USSR and their protracted war with the subsequent weakening of both opponents, then it seems most likely that initially London and Washington would have taken a wait-and-see attitude. And then everything would be decided by the scale of the military successes of the Red Army.

The political conditions for an attack on Germany by the USSR were quite favorable. Unfortunately, fearing an Anglo-German compromise, the Soviet leadership delayed the attack on Germany for at least a month, which, as we now know, was the only chance to thwart the German invasion. Probably, this decision "is one of the main historical miscalculations of Stalin"!!7, who missed a favorable opportunity to defeat the most powerful European power and, having reached the coast of the Atlantic Ocean, eliminate the age-old Western threat to our country. As a result, the German leadership was able to start on June 22, 1941, the implementation

the Barbarossa plan and the Soviet Union had to wage war on its territory for 3 years, which led to colossal human and material losses. Thus, both Germany and the USSR carefully prepared for the war, and from the beginning of 1941 this process entered its final stage, which made the start of the Soviet-German war inevitable precisely in 1941, no matter who it was. its initiator. Initially, the Wehrmacht intended to complete military preparations by May 16, and the Red Army by June 12, 1941. Then Berlin postponed the attack, moving it to June 22, Moscow did the same a month later, setting a new tentative completion date. military preparations - July 15, 1941. As is now known, both sides in their calculations proceeded from the fact that the war would begin on their own initiative. Unfortunately, Soviet intelligence was not able to reliably establish Germany's intentions for the summer of 1941, so the Soviet leadership failed to correctly assess the threat of a German attack. Correctly noting the growing crisis. in Soviet-German relations, Moscow believed that there was still time before the final break, both for diplomatic maneuvers and for the completion of military preparations. The sudden German attack on the USSR on June 22, 1941 and the first failures at the front had a stunning effect on the Soviet leadership. This situation was most vividly described in his memoirs by the then People's Commissar of the Navy N.G. Kuznetsov, noting that "the state machine, directed along the rails of the improbability of Hitler's attack, was forced to stop, go through a period of confusion and then turn 180 degrees. The consequences of this had to be corrected on the move at the cost of great sacrifices!

NOTES

1 Perechnev Yu.G. On some problems of preparing the country and the Armed Forces to repel fascist aggression//Military Historical Journal. 1988, No. 4, pp. 46-47; Kiryan M.M. Initial pe

151

period of the Great Patriotic War // Military History Journal. 1988, No. 6, pp. 12-13; Anfilov V.A. The collapse of Hitler's campaign against Moscow. 1941 M., 1989. S. 80-86; Sandalov L.M. The first days of the war: The fighting of the 4th Army June 22 - July 10, 1941. M., 1989. S. 22-37; Zakharov M.V. General Staff in the prewar years. Moscow, 2005, pp. 173-183, 312-322, 324-340; Volkogonov D.A. Triumph and Tragedy: A Political Portrait of I.V. Stalin. In 2 books. M., 1989. Book. 2. Part 1. S. 132-136; Khorkov A.G. Thunderstorm June: Tragedy and feat of troops of frontier military districts in the initial period of the Great Patriotic War. M., 1991. S. 85-130; Kirshin Yu.Ya., Ramanichev N.M. On the eve of June 22, 1941//New and recent history. 1991, No. 3. S. 12-15. Gorkov Yu.A. Was Stalin preparing a preemptive strike against Hitler in 1941// New and recent history. 1993, No. 3, pp. 29-39; Makovsky V.B. Covering the state border on the eve of the war // Military History Journal. 1993, No. 5, pp. 51-58; Anfilov V.A. Terrible summer 4] years. M., 1995. S. 59-62; Anfilov V.A. The road to the tragedy of 1941. M., 1997. S. 157-161.

2 Volkogonov D.A. Decree. op. S. 133; Zakharov M.V. Decree. op. S. 173.

3 1941 - lessons and conclusions. M., 1992. S. 51-52.

4 Military History Journal. 1991, No. 12, pp. 17-20; Military history magazine. 1992, No. 1. S. 7-29; Military history magazine. 1992, No. 2, pp. 18-22; New and recent history. 1993, No. 3, pp. 40-45; 1941 Documentation. In 2 books. M., 1998. Book. 1. S. 181-193, 236-253, 741-746, Book. 2. S. 215-220.

5 Vasilevsky A.M. On the eve of the war//New and recent history. 1992, No. 6. S. 6.

6 1941 - lessons and conclusions. S. 52; Gorkov Yu.A. Kremlin. Bid. General Staff. Tver, 1995, pp. 56-57; Mikhalev S.N. Military strategy: Preparation and conduct of wars of modern and modern times. M., 2003. S. 309.

7 1941. Documentation. Book. 1. S. 288-290.

8 1941 - lessons and conclusions. S. 56.

7 Zakharov M.V. Decree. op. pp. 194-203, 364-384; Bobylev P.N. Rehearsal of the disaster//Military Historical Journal. 1993, No. 7, pp. 14-21; No. 8, pp. 28-35; Russian archive: Great Patriotic. T. 12(1). M., 1993. S. 388-390; Bobylev P.N. What kind of war was the General Staff of the Red Army preparing for in 1941?//Otechestvennaya istoriya. 1995, No. 5. S. 3-20; New and recent history. 1992, No. 6. S. 9; Projector D.M. Fascism: the path of aggression and death. M., 1989. S. 308.

10 194] year - lessons and conclusions. S. 57; New and recent history. 1993, No. 3. S. 34-35.

! Petrov B.N. On the strategic deployment of the Red Army on the eve of the war // Military Historical Journal. 1991, No. 12. S. 12.

12 Gorkov Yu.A. Decree. op. S. 61.

13 New and recent history. 1992, No. 6. S. 9.

14 Gorkov Yu.A. Decree. op. S. 61.

15 Volkogonov D.A. This version has already been refuted by history // Izvestia.

152

1993. Jan 16; Orlov A.S. So who started the war? //Army. 1993, No. 8. S. 18; Bezymensky L.A. On the "Zhukov plan" of May 15, 1941//New and recent history. 2000, No. 3. S. 58-67.

16 New and recent history. 1993, No. 3. P. 38. True, according to M.V. Zakharov and S.N. Mikhalev, on a document dated July 1940, there was the signature of the Chief of the General Staff B.M. Shaposhnikova (Zakharov M.V. Decree op. P. 322; Mikhalev S.N. Decree op. P. 309).

17 New and recent history. 1992, No. 6. S. 8.

18 "... The conversation ended with Stalin's threat." Ten unknown conversations with Marshal G.K. Zhukov in May-June 1965 // Military Historical Journal. 1995, No. 3. P. 41. After the publication of the diary of visitors to Stalin's Kremlin office, V.A. Anfilov "remembered" that Zhukov told him that the plan of May 15, 1941 was reported by him and Timoshenko to Stalin on May 19: Anfilov V.A. Long way to Berlin // Independent military review. 1999, No. 17. S. 1-3.

19 Svetlishin N.A. Steep steps of fate. The life and feats of arms of Marshal G.K. Zhukov. Khabarovsk, 1992, pp. 57-58.

20 RGVA F. 4. Op. 156. D. 2. L. 40-4406.

21 "The modern army is an offensive army." Speech by I.V. Stalin at a reception in the Kremlin in front of graduates of military academies. May 1941//Historical archive. 1995, No. 2, pp. 23-31; 1941 Documentation. Book. 2. S. 158-162.

22 New and recent history. 1993, No. 3. S. 37.

23 Dashichev V.I. Bankruptcy strategy of German fascism. In 2 t. M., 1973. T. 2. S. 128; Sipols V.Ya. diplomatic secrets. Eve of the Great Patriotic War. 1939-1941. M., 1997. P. 404. Cipher telegram: "Password "Dortmund" - June 22" was sent from Berlin on the night of June 21, 1941 (Kgÿerÿÿavebisÿÿ 4ez Obegkottapaos 4eg Meÿgtasÿ. Va.1. Egarpeik at Mash. 1965. 5. 408).

24 Sipols V.Ya. Decree. op. S. 210.

25 Bobylev P.N. It's too early to put an end to the discussion. On the issue of planning a possible war with Germany in the General Staff of the Red Army in 1940-1941//Otechestvennaya istoriya. 2000, No. 1. S. 57.

26 Kiselev V.N. Stubborn facts of the beginning of the war//Military-historical magazine. 1992, No. 2, pp. 14-15; Danilov V.D. Stalin's strategy for starting the war: plans and reality // Another war. 1939-1945 pp. 144-146; National history. 1995, No. 5. S. 16; National history. 2000, No. 1. S. 51, 55-56.

27 194] year. Documentation. Book. 2. S. 144.

28 Gorkov Yu.A. Decree. op. S. 109.

29 Military history magazine. 1996, No. 2. S. 2.

30 New and recent history. 1992, No. 6. S. 4; 1941 - lessons and conclusions. pp. 58-59, 214-215; Zakharov M.V. Decree. op. pp. 218-219, 396-389; 1941 Documentation. Book. 2. S. 358-361.

31 Military history magazine. 1991, No. 12, pp. 17-18; Military history magazine. 1992, No. 1. S. 24-25; No. 2, pp. 18-19; New and

153

recent history. 1993, No. 3, pp. 40-41; 1941 Documentation. Book. 1. S. 181-182, 237-238, 742, Book. 2. S. 215-216.

32 Military History Journal. 1991, No. 12, p. 18; Military Historical Journal. 1992, No. 1. S. 25; No. 2, p. 20; 1941 Documentation. Book. 1. S. 182, 238, 743.

33 Military History Journal. 1991, No. 12, pp. 18-19; 1941 Documentation. Book. 1. S. 182-183.

34 Military History Journal. 1992, No. 1. S. 25-26; No. 2, pp. 20-21; New and recent history. 1993, No. 3, pp. 40-41; 1941 Documentation. Book. 1. S. 238-239, 743-744, Book. 2. S. 216.

35 Shubin A.V. The world is on the edge of the abyss. From global crisis to world war. 1929-1941. M., 2004. S. 466-469.

36 New and recent history. 1992, No. 6. S. 7.

37 Military history magazine. 1991, No. 12, p. 19; Military Historical Journal. 1992, No. 1. S. 27; No. 2, p. 22; New and recent history. 1993, No. 3. S. 41; 1941 - lessons and conclusions. pp. 214-215; 1941 Documentation. Book. 1. S. 185, 241, 745, Book. 2. S. 217, 359-360.

38 Gareev M.A. The truth about war cannot be taken or given away. We must look for it together // Krasnaya Zvezda. 1991, 27 July.

39 Gareev M.A. Ambiguous pages of the war. (Essays on problematic issues of the Great Patriotic War). M., 1995. S. 125-126.

40 Military History Journal. 1992, No. 1. S. 28-29; New and recent history. 1993, No. 3, pp. 42-44; 1941 - lessons and conclusions. pp. 212-215; 1941 Documentation. Book. 1. S. 185-189, 242-250, Book. 2. S. 218-219, 359.

41 Military Historical Journal. 1991, No. 12, p. 20; 1941 Documentation. Book. 1. S. 185-187.

42 Military History Journal. 1992, No. 1. S. 27-28; 1941 Documentation. Book. 1. S. 241-249; New and recent history. 1993, No. 3. S. 33.

43 1941. Documentation. Book. 1. S. 189-190, 249-250.

44 Ibid. S. 247.

45 Shubin A.V. Decree. op. S. 470.

46 Savushkin R.A. The development of Soviet military art in the period between the Civil and Great Patriotic Wars. M., 1980. S. 24, 32.

47 Savushkin R.A. The development of the Soviet armed forces and military art in the interwar period (1921-1941). M., 1989. S. 59.

48 Military History Journal. 1992, No. 2. S. 22.

49 New and recent history. 1993, No. 3. S. 35.

50 Mikhalev S.N. Decree. op. S. 312.

51 New and recent history. 1993, No. 3. S. 35.

52 Mikhalev S.N. Decree. op. pp. 312-313.

53 Gorodetsky G. The myth of the "Icebreaker": On the eve of the war. / Per. from English. M., 1995. S. 284; Vishlev O.V. On the eve of June 22, 1941 Documentary essays. M., 2001. S. 36.

154

54 Gareev M.A. Decree. op. S. 93.

55 1941. Documentation. Book. 1. S. 741-746.

56 New and recent history. 1993, No. 3. S. 41; 1941 Documentation. Book. 1. S. 216.

57 Great Patriotic War 1941-1945 Military-historical essays. In 4 books. Book. 1. Severe tests. M., 1998. S. 108.

58 New and recent history. 1993, No. 3, pp. 41-43; 1941 Documentation. Book. 1. S. 216-218.

59 Mikhalev S.N. Decree. op. S. 316.

60 The initial period of the war. M., 1974. S. 70.

61 1941 - lessons and conclusions. pp. 69-79, 178-179; 1941 Documentation. Book. 1. S. 607-650.

62 New and recent history. 1997, No. 5. S. 113.

63 Military History Journal. 1996, No. 2. S. 2-15; No. 3. P. 4-17; No. 4, pp. 2-17; No. 5. S. 2-15; No. 6. P. 2-7.

64 Anfilov V.A. Blitzkrieg failure. M., 1974. S. 196; Petrov B.N. On the strategic deployment of the Red Army on the eve of the war//Military History Journal. 1991, No. 12. S. 12-13; Semidetko V.A. The origins of the defeat in Belarus//Military-historical magazine. 1989, No. 4. S. 30.

65 Gareev M.A. Decree. op. S. 128.

66 Military History Journal. 1996, No. 2. S. 4.

67 Ibid. 1996, No. 2, pp. 14-15; No. 3, pp. 11-12; No. 4. P. 8-10; No. 5. P. 12, No. 6. P. 7.

68 Ibid. 1996, No. 2. S. 8, 13; No. 3. P. 15; No. 4. P. 3; No. 5. P. 12.

69 Ibid., No. 2, p. 13.

70 Gareev M.A. M.V. Frunze is a military theorist. M., 1985. S. 323.

P There. S. 231.

72 Makovsky V.B. Decree. op. S. 55; Military history magazine. 1989, No. 3, pp. 68-69.

73 Gareev M.A. Decree. op. S. 230; Gareev M.A. Ambiguous pages of the war. pp. 119-120.

74 Makovsky V.B. Decree. op. S. 55; Khorkov A.G. Decree. op. S. 93.

75 1941 - lessons and conclusions. pp. 60-61.

76 New and recent history. 1993, No. 3. S. 44; 1941 - lessons and conclusions. S.61, 179; 1941 Documentation. Book. 2. S. 219.

77 Military history magazine. 1996, No. 2. S. 6; No. 4. P. 3; No. 6. P. 4; 1941 Documentation. Book. 2. S. 228, 234, 240, 284.

78 1941. Documentation. Book. 2. S. 133-139; Military history magazine. 1991, No. 12. S. 12.

79 New and recent history. 1993, No. 6. S. 9.

80 New and recent history. 1997, No. 5. S. 109; New and recent history. 1993, No. 3. S. 33.

81 1941. Documentation. Book. 1. S. 484-497.

82 New and recent history. 1993, No. 3, pp. 42-43, 44; 1941 Documentation. Book. 2. S. 219, 220.

83 GARF. F. r-5446. Op. Zas. D. 3. L. 274-277; 1941 Document

155

You. Book. 1. S. 731-732; Gorkov Yu.A. Decree. op. pp. 70-71; 1941 - lessons and conclusions. S. 82; Vladimirovsky A.V. On the Kiev direction. M., 1989. S. 50; Zakharov M.V. Decree. op. pp. 469-478; Combat and numerical strength of the Armed Forces of the USSR during the Great Patriotic War (1941-1945): Statistical Collection No. 1 (June 22, 1941). M., 1994. S. 10-12.

84 Strategic essay on the Great Patriotic War 1941-1945. M., 1961. S. 146. The number of the second strategic echelon by the beginning of the war is determined in this work at 77 divisions (58 rifle, 13 tank and 6 motorized) (decree cit. p. 151), but from the available documents, it is not clear which troops and from what exact moment were part of the reserve of the High Command.

85 Petrov B.N. Decree. op. pp. 12-13; Semidetko V.A. Decree. op. S. 31; Anfilov V.A. The collapse of Hitler's campaign against Moscow. pp. 96-97; Vladimirovsky A.V. Decree. op. pp. 50-52; Volkogonov D.A. Decree. op. pp. 125-128; 1941 - lessons and conclusions. pp. 83-86, 214-215; Filippov A. On the readiness of the Red Army for war in June 1941//Military Bulletin of the APN. 1992, No. 9. S. 4; Kiselev V.N. Decree. op. pp. 14-15; New and recent history. 1993, No. 3. S. 36; Galitsky K.N. Years of severe trials. 1941-1944. Commander's Notes. M., 1973. S. 24-26.

86 1941 - lessons and conclusions. P.198 - 199; Khorkov A.G. Decree. op. pp. 32-33; Combat and strength of the Armed Forces of the USSR during the Great Patriotic War. Statistical collection No. 1. S. 16-18.

87 1941 - lessons and conclusions. pp. 42-43; Kirshin Yu.Ya., Ramanichev N.M. Decree. op. S. 12; Khorkov A.G. Decree. op. S. 49.

88 Khorkov A.G. Decree. op. S. 50.

89 Logistics of the Soviet Armed Forces in the Great Patriotic War. M., 1977. S. 60.

90 Russian archive: Great Patriotic War. Rear of the Red Army in the Great Patriotic War 1941-1945: Documents and materials. T. 25(14). M., 1998. S. 61-65.

91 Pastukhovskiy G.P. Deployment of the operational rear in the initial period of the war // Military Historical Journal. 1988, No. 6. S. 19.

92 Logistics of the Soviet Army in the Great Patriotic War 1941-1945. L., 1963. Part 1. S. 15.

93 The initial period of the war. pp. 70-71.

94 Azyassky N.F. On the strategic deployment of the armed forces of Germany and the Soviet Union in 1941// Military Thought. 1990, No. 8. S. 17.

95 Vishlev O.V. Was there opposition to Stalin's "German policy" in the USSR on the eve of June 22, 1941//New and Contemporary History. 1994, No. 4-5. pp. 242-253.

96 Suvorov V. Icebreaker: Who Started World War II? M., 1992. S. 333.

97 The initial period of the war. S. 212.

156

98 Suvorov V. Decree. op. pp. 317, 333.

99 Russian archive: Great Patriotic War. Rear of the Red Army in the Great Patriotic War 1941-1945: Documents and materials. T. 25(14). pp. 48-52.

100 Stadnyuk I.S. Something about Stalinism // There were legends about them. M., 1994. S. 423-424.

101 Kiselev V.N. Decree. op. S. 16; Danilov V.D. Decree. op. S. 148; National history. 2000, No. 1. S. 57.

102 194] year - lessons and conclusions. pp. 81-85, 111; Khorkov A.G. Decree. op. pp. 25, 33, 47, 168, 173-174; Kiselev V.N. Decree. op. p.15; Military history magazine. 1989, No. 5. S. 43; Medvedev N.E. Artillery of the RVGK in the first period of the war // Military History Journal. 1987, No. 11, p. 81; Zakharov M.V. Decree. op. pp. 210-212, 402-406; The initial period of the war. S. 211; Anfilov V.A. Blitzkrieg failure. S. 188.

103 The order of G.K. Zhukov was never published and is known only by mention during the trial of the command of the Western Front in July 1941 (State security agencies in the Great Patriotic War. Vol. 2. Book 1. Beginning. June 22 - August 31, 1941. M., 2000. S. 389.). However, the order issued on its basis by the commander of the PribOVO No. 00229 dated June 18, 1941 was published (Ivanikhin P.M. Beginning of the war. North-Western Front, June - September 1941. From Kaunas to Valdai: Based on the materials of the diary of Colonel Shchetkin Grigory Fedorovich, Moscow, 2002, pp. 30, 168-171.)

104 The grouping of the troops of the parties is taken from: Collection of military-historical materials of the Great Patriotic War. Issue. 18. P. 66-68, 79-85; 1941 Documentation. Book. 2. S. 216-219.

105 Once again Keÿsÿ ipa eg Gmetse MeÿÿKgier. Siiirapi. 1983. Va. 4.5.313-316.

106 Müller-Hillebrand B. Land Army of Germany 1933-1945. / Per. with him. Moscow, 1958, vol. 2, pp. 136-137, 151-152, 215-252, 257-264.

107 Reckoning: Third Reich: falling into the abyss. M., 1994. S. 117.

108 Lisichkin V.A., Shelepin L.A. Global Evil Empire. M., 2001.

109 Gareev M.A. Was the Soviet Union preparing a pre-emptive attack on Germany in 1941? // War and Politics, 1939-1941. S. 275.

110 Churchill W. World War II. / Abbr. per. from English. M., 1991. Book. 2. S. 169.

11 Ibid. pp. 169-170.

12 Ibid. S. 170.

13 Ibid. pp. 170-171.

114 Lashichev V.I. Bankruptcy strategy of German fascism. T. 2. S. 59-60.

115 History of the Second World War 1939-1945. In 12t.T. 4. M., 1975. S. 33-34.

116 The table was compiled according to: RGVA. F. 40997. Op. 1. D. 63. L. 36, 37, 40; Safronov V.G. Italian troops on the Soviet-German front

157

those. 1941-1943. M., 1990. S. 24; Müller-Hillebrand B. Land Army of Germany 1933-1945 / Per. with him. M., 1976. T. 3. S. 326; A N! \$ ogu oE fe 05 Ash Eogse 1907-1957. M.U., 1957. R. 92; H1yuopka! Z(aizIK og OSA. Mazhÿnegop. 1975. R. 1141; Tÿe Agtu Ałtapas. Mnÿ-ÿÿpeÿop. 1950. P. 649; Napsosk J.K. Vgÿÿÿÿ mag Esopotu. 1., 1949. P. 136; Once Yueÿÿÿÿÿ, keis ip 4eg 2 -sagged mskggÿer. ÿiiyarag. 1988. Va. 5/1. 8. 554-555, 874-875, 959; NIP E. M.Aphepa captiyuyepa ieiÿÿpap neiga, 1933-1945. Kyyyp2. Kyyyp2. History of the Second World War 1939-1945, V. 3. M., 1974, p. 195; V. 4. P. 13, 15, 20, 194, 195, 200; Berezovsky N.Yu., etc. Combat chronicle of the Navy, 1917-1941. M., 1992. S. 675; Jarapese Mauu, 1896-1945. G., 1977. P. 25-35, 40-50, 79-87, 130-153, 160-182.

117 Sakharov A.N. War and Soviet diplomacy: 1939-1945// Questions of history. 1995, No. 7. S. 38.

18 Kuznetsov N.G. Sharp turns: From the notes of the admiral. M., 1995. pp. 45-46.

Sergei Kremlev

IF STALIN HIT ...

once I say that the version of the reality of the preventive

USSR strike on Germany in the summer of 1941 has

the right to exist only as one of the theoretical assumptions in order to complete the analysis of that historical period. In reality, there was no question of any preventive strike by the USSR against Germany in the summer of 1941, and all other statements on this score were either idle chatter of non-professionals, or a deliberate provocation of professionals. Below I hope to show this even within the framework of a brief article, but first, a saying...

Almost twenty years have passed since the collapse of the USSR. During this time, at least once, all statesmen, political and military figures, scientists and cultural figures who during their lifetime had one or another relation to Russia and Russian history turned over in their graves. The reasons for such mass anxiety of the deceased vary, but the reason for all is the same - our Time of Troubles, which began in 1991 and is still ongoing, that is, events that have occurred and are occurring within the Russian Geopolitical space in the period from 1991 to the present. fast days.

Of course, behind the grave, different historical figures have different concerns. For example, Alexander Nevsky, Dmitry Donskoy, Ivan the Terrible, Peter, Ekaterina, Stalin are turning over in their graves, outraged by the surrender of the geopolitical status of Russia, for which they fought so stubbornly and successfully. Skopin-Shuisky, Sheremetev, Suvorov, Ushakov, Kutuzov, Skobelev, Frunze, Rokossovsky are haunted by a mediocre line

159

in the "Russian" military leadership. Pushkin, Lermontov, Gogol, all three Tolstoys, Yesenin, Mayakovsky, Gorky, Fedin, Sholokhov are kept awake by the desecration of Russian and Soviet culture. And, say, Lomonosov, Butlerov, Mendeleev, Pavlov, Vavilov, Kurchatov, Kolmogorov, Paton the Father, Keldysh are worried about the desecration and death of Soviet science.

Restlessly - but for a different reason - Batu and Mamai, Karl KhP, Napoleon, Clemenceau, Churchill, Baruch, Truman and many others lie in their graves. This haunts the envy of Gorbachev, Yeltsin, their "Russian" and "SS" descendants, as well as the members of the current "Washington Regional Committee", who together successfully accomplished what the already deceased anti-Russian and anti-Soviet the army could not do so.

And even the ashes of the Fuhrer, scattered in April 1970 over the Biederitz River, 11 kilometers from Magdeburg, also hover restlessly over Europe, unable to control the excitement and envying those who managed to conquer the USSR and Moscow without any tanks - only Ostankino.

And next to the ashes of the Fuhrer, the ashes of the Imperial Minister of Propaganda Joseph Goebbels, scattered in the same April over the same river Biederitz, curl into envious loops. The master of political provocation and the author of the chased formula "In order to believe in a lie, it must be monstrous," he clearly envies the author of a whole pile of anti-Soviet "bestsellers" to "Viktor"-Vladi to the world of "Suvorov"-Rezun. Still would! The idea of Stalin's preventive war against the Reich was tested and launched into circulation in the department of the Reich Minister, who burned down in the flames of the war, and all the glory from its replication today goes to the author of the unforgettable Icebreaker. It's a shame! Where is there to rest in peace in the world, and so peace has not been rich for a long time.

Yes, the assertion that Hitler in 1941 only forestalled Stalin in a preventive strike on a matter of weeks

160

is a lie. But many believed in it only because this lie is monstrous. And, everything well...

And yet, if we look at the eve of the war and its beginning in the way that Hitler and Goebbels suggested to their contemporaries, and in the way that, after them, "Viktor" and "Suvorov" already offer us? What if, nevertheless, to imagine the unimaginable?

Further, I will do this - since I am participating in a collective collection with the appropriate topic - I will do it. Although I need to explain a few things first...

I wrote "unimaginable" not because I think that a preventive strike by the USSR against Germany was impossible in principle. On the contrary, any competent analyst familiar with the reality of that era cannot theoretically rule out the possibility of a preventive war by the USSR against the Third Reich, given a certain development of events and in a certain situation. But this same analyst cannot but be aware that such an option was absolutely excluded for the summer of 1941.

No, technically (not in the military-technical sense, but, so to speak, in the military-technological sense), such an option was possible in the summer of 1941. For example, today the relevant developments of the General Staff of the Red Army are known, and it would be surprising if then, in real time,

such developments of a preemptive strike by the Red Army against the accumulation of the armed forces of the Reich in the east were not carried out. General staffs exist for this, among other things, to consider in detail both defensive and offensive options for possible campaigns. That is, the very functional purpose of the General Staff of the Red Army speaks for the fact that a technologically preemptive strike by the Red Army was possible. However, such a strike in 1941 was systematically improbable.

6 A. Isaev 161

But the impossible and the unbelievable are very different concepts.

Father Brown's character, Gilbert Keith Chesterton, distinguished between possibility and probability with wit and precision. In the story "The Curse of the Golden Cross", he declares through the mouth of his hero that some events are possible, but improbable, and says: "If you say that the great Gladstone (a prominent English politician and statesman. - S.K. .) in his hour of death haunted by the ghost of Parnell (a leader in the Irish national movement. — S.K.), I would rather be an agnostic and say neither yes nor no. But if you will assure me that Gladstone did not take off his hat at the first reception with Queen Victoria, patted the queen on the back and offered her a cigar, I will strongly object. I won't say it's impossible, but I'll say it's incredible."

All right! In principle, someone can light a cigar at a royal reception, go up to the queen, slap her on the shoulder and, in a familiar way, offer to smoke. There is nothing "technically" impossible in such behavior - it's not like putting pants over your head. Nevertheless, such behavior is completely unbelievable even in our time.

So, Stalin's preventive war against Hitler in the summer of 1941 was not impossible. She was incredible. And this is what I emphasize. It was improbable already because, even if we do not take into account the obvious unpreparedness of the Red Army to conduct an offensive war in 1941, there is every reason to assert that in June 1941 a preventive war would have been stupidity for Stalin in all respects. .

And Stalin did not suffer even in the slightest from this inalienable quality of the current "Russian" elite.

Therefore, before analyzing the incredible, it does not hurt to at least briefly reflect on why the theoretically possible preventive war of the USSR

162

against Germany was, at least in 1941, incredible?

This is where I'll start.

First, even if Stalin had planned a preventive war against Germany, then in 1941 such a war would have been improbable, if only because it was premature. Well, actually! The reasoning here is simple and obvious.

Let us assume that by the summer of 1941 Hitler had no aggressive plans against Russia (although in reality he had them). Why, then, was Russia to start a war with him in the summer of 1941 on its own initiative? If Russia should have undertaken something similar, then the reasonable option would be not earlier than the summer of 1942, and even better, the summer of 1943. I am referring specifically to our preventive war against the Reich after the strengthening of the economy and, most importantly, after the complete re-equipment of the Red Army and the mastering of new technology by its personnel. And this is just, according to plans, - 1942 and 1943.

Secondly, the preventive war of the USSR against Germany in the summer of 1941 was not only premature, but also inexpedient. Unlike Germany, for which a preventive war made at least some sense.

We will analyze literally "on the fingers" - this will be quite enough!

Here is the situation of the virtual, that is, completely peaceful in the East, 1941 for Germany...

A huge mass of troops has been mobilized, which does not fight, but which must be supported. Enormous stockpiles of armaments have been accumulated that are not really used - except for aviation and navy in limited operations against England.

There is nowhere else to build up Germany's military might. As a result, the German armed forces of the 1942 model - in the event that they had not been involved in 1941 against Russia - would have been approximately the same in their potential as in 1941, and the strength of their resistance to a hypothetical strike The USSR in 1942 would not have been larger than with a preventive strike

163

USSR in 1941. In a peaceful — peaceful on the potential Eastern Front — 1941, the Germans would most likely even have weakened, psychologically tired of inaction. Consider Hannibal in Capua. His troops there idled simply decomposed.

The industrial and general economic potential of Germany would not have increased significantly in 1941 either - all the main territorial acquisitions that strengthened it had been made earlier.

On the other hand, the military-political position of Germany by the summer of 1942 would definitely worsen due to the increasing involvement of the United States of America in the war in Europe, which started this whole war. I have written about this a lot before. And Stalin did not give Hitler any reliable guarantees of the preservation of Soviet neutrality in the future. |

By the way, Hitler understood all this very well. And all the fabrications of Rezun—"Suvorov" about the Fuhrer, allegedly deceived by Stalin, are convincingly refuted by the Fuhrer himself. It is enough to read the authentic, but little-known, rarely quoted, letter from Hitler, sent by him to Mussolini on the eve of the war - June 21, 1941. As far as I know, in the USSR it was first published in No. 5 of the small-circulation Military Historical Journal for 1965 and began

So:

"Ray! I am writing this letter to you at the moment when months of hard thinking, as well as eternal nervous waiting, ended with the adoption of the most difficult decision in my life ... Further waiting will lead to disastrous results this or next year at the latest consequences...

After the annihilation of France - in general, after the liquidation of all their Western European positions - the British warmongers keep their eyes on where they tried to start the war: on the Soviet Union.

Both states, Soviet Russia and England, are equally interested in a disintegrated, weakened

164

telny war in Europe. Behind these states stands the North American Union in a pose of instigator and expectant ...

If we continue to endure this danger, we will probably have to lose the whole of 1941, and at the same time the general situation will not change in the least. On the contrary, England will be even more opposed to the conclusion of peace, since she will still rely on a Russian partner. Moreover, this hope will naturally grow as the combat readiness of the Russian armed forces increases. And behind all this, there are still American massive deliveries of war materials, which have been expected since 1942..."

Everything mentioned in the Fuhrer's letter objectively forced Hitler to take some large-scale actions against the USSR as soon as possible - already in 1941. What was done in reality, because the peaceful year of 1941 in relations with the USSR without reliable guarantees of a long-term partnership with it did not give Germany any advantages and benefits. On the contrary, peace with the USSR put the Reich in an increasingly difficult situation. location. After all, the Germans were already at war with England, which did not want to make peace. because he was categorically not needed by the States.

But for the USSR, an extra year of peace was fundamentally important in all respects! We would have advantages in everything, starting with the fact that in 1942 the Third Five-Year Plan would have been peacefully completed and the economic potential of the USSR would have sharply increased. By the summer of 1942 (and even more so by 1943!) the Red Army would have been completely re-equipped with excellent weapons. If not on paper, but in reality, mighty tank and air corps would be formed, new rifle divisions would be trained. And this force, brand new, but already tested for the upcoming battles, by preemptively striking the Wehrmacht units stationed near the borders with the USSR, would have a decisive chance of success.

I would have, but - not in 1941, but in 1942.

165

And even better - in 1943.

What - Stalin did not understand this?

He understood everything perfectly, and therefore did not think of any strike in 1941. In addition, he could not help but take into account the fact that the position of the Reich would only worsen every year due to the unwillingness of the Anglo-Saxons to make peace with Hitler. If the Wehrmacht had not struck Russia in 1941, then this would have been even less likely in the next year, 1942. On the other hand, if Hitler had not started a war with Russia, in 1942, and in any case, in 1943, one would have expected powerful blows from the United States of America and England, which entered the Second World War, against Europe occupied by the Germans. . As a result, the position of the Germans would only become more difficult.

So why did Stalin need to rush things and involve Russia in a dangerous war with the Reich? Wouldn't it have been smarter to strengthen the USSR and calmly observe the course of events? And if we were to prepare a strike against Germany, then it would be delivered at a particularly favorable moment for this, not earlier than 1942.

Yes, I wrote more than once, and to this day I am convinced that the most reasonable option for the USSR and Stalin would be an alliance with Germany and our joint actions with her on an anti-Anglo-Saxon and anti-imperialist basis. It was difficult to implement, but a possible option. Both possible and probable! However, if we conduct an analysis within the framework of a theoretical assumption about the expediency for the USSR of a preventive war against the Third Reich, then the correct conclusion here can be, I repeat, one: the option of such a war for 1941 was completely excluded.

For 1941!

By the way, what was said above is actually confirmed by the German authors themselves, who wrote on the topic after the war. Here's the thing... If we have a lot of documents confirming the USSR's concern about the military preparations of the Germans on the border with the USSR (suffice it to recall before

166

carrying reconnaissance of the NKVD border troops from 1941, which were immediately broadcast by Beria to Stalin, Molotov and Timoshenko with Zhukov), then there are, in fact, no similar documents from the German side in nature.

And this is an extremely revealing and evidence-based fact!

Large-scale military preparations, and even in border areas, cannot be hidden from a potential enemy for a long time. And if the activity of the Red Army in the border zone in 1941 had the character of preparation for a preventive war, this circumstance would have been necessarily recorded by the German intelligence services and immediately brought to the attention of the top leadership of Germany, including Hitler.

There is no doubt that this would be so, also because the English and American agent of influence in the "top" of the Wehrmacht - I mean the chief of the Abwehr, Admiral Canaris - had to impress the Führer not only about Russian weakness, in order to push Hitler to war with us, but also with the same inflammatory goals to create the impression that the Russians will strike soon. Nevertheless, the Abwehr could not put anything like the Soviet intelligence reports cited below, laid by Beria on Stalin's table, on Hitler's table. He could not, despite all the efforts of Canaris and his Abwehr associates in serving the Anglo-Saxons and the Golden Elite of the world.

On the other hand, we had enough information about the preparation of the German aggression against the USSR in 1941. And it reached Stalin in real time and, despite many years of slander against him, was taken into account by him in a timely manner.

This is what the People's Commissar for Internal Affairs of the USSR L.P. Beria. Here is what he wrote about the preparations of the Germans for the transfer of German troops to the Soviet border and about the violation of the airspace of the USSR, for example, in note No. 1196/B dated April 21, 1941:

167

"From April 1 to April 19, 1941, the border detachments of the NKVD of the USSR on the Soviet-German border obtained the following data on the arrival of German troops at points adjacent to the state border in East Prussia and the General Government.

In the border zone of Klaipeda region:

Two infantry divisions arrived, an infantry regiment, a cavalry squadron, an artillery battalion, a tank battalion, and a company of scooters.

To Suwalki Lykk area:

Up to two mechanized divisions, four infantry and two cavalry regiments, tank and engineer battalions arrived.

To Myshinets-Ostrolenka area:

Up to four infantry and one artillery regiments arrived, as well as a tank battalion and a motorcycle battalion.

To the Ostrov-Mazowiecki-Malkinya-Gurna area:

One infantry and one cavalry regiment arrived, up to two artillery battalions and a company of tanks.

To the area of Biala Podlaska:

One infantry regiment, two sapper battalions, a cavalry squadron, a company of scooters, and an artillery battery arrived.

To the Vlodava-Otkhovok area:

Up to three infantry, one cavalry and two artillery regiments arrived.

To the area of the city of Holm:

Arrived up to three infantry, four artillery and one motorized regiments, a cavalry regiment and a sapper battalion. Over five hundred vehicles are also concentrated there.

To the Hrubieszow area:

Up to four infantry, one artillery and one motorized regiments and a cavalry squadron arrived.

To the Tomasov area:

The headquarters of the formation arrived, up to three infantry divisions, and up to three hundred tanks,

To the Pshevorsk-Yaroslav area:

168

They arrived up to an infantry division, over an artillery regiment and up to two cavalry regiments. <...>

The concentration of German troops near the border took place in small units, up to a battalion, squadron, battery, and often at night.

In the same areas where the troops arrived, a large amount of ammunition, fuel and artificial anti-tank obstacles were delivered.

In April, work on the construction of fortifications intensified. <...>

During the period from April 1 to April 19, German planes violated the state border 43 times, making reconnaissance flights over our territory to a depth of 200 km.

Most of the planes were fixed over the regions: Riga, Kretinga, Taurogen, Lomzha, Rava Russkaya, Przemyśl, Rovno.

Application: scheme.

People's Commissar of Internal Affairs of the USSR Beria

And here are extracts from Beria's note No. 1798/B dated June 2, 1941. In a note sent personally to Stalin, in particular, it was said:

"... The border detachments of the NKVD of the Byelorussian, Ukrainian and Moldavian SSR obtained the following information about the military activities of the Germans near the border with the USSR.

Two army groups concentrated in the areas of Tomasov and Lezhaysk. In these areas, the headquarters of two armies were identified: the headquarters of the 16th army in the town of Ulyanow ... and the headquarters of the army in the Usmierz estate ... the commander of which is General Reichenau (requires clarification).

On May 25 from Warsaw ... the transfer of troops of all branches was noted. The movement of troops occurs mainly at night.

On May 17, a group of pilots arrived in Terespol, and on

169

airfield in Voskshenitsa (near Terespol) one hundred aircraft were delivered. <...>

The generals of the German army carry out reconnaissance near the border: May 11, General Reichenau - in the area of the town of Ulguwek ... May 18 - the general with a group of officers - in the area

Belzhets... On May 23, a general with a group of officers... in the Radymno area.

Pontoons, canvas and inflatable boats are concentrated in many points near the border. The largest number of them was noted in the directions to Brest and Lvov. <...>

In addition, information was received about the transfer of German troops from Budapest and Bucharest in the direction of the borders with the USSR...<...>

Reason: telegraphic reports of districts.

People's Commissar of Internal Affairs of the USSR Beria

On June 5, 1941, Beria sent a note to Stalin No. 1868 / B:

"Border detachments of the NKVD of the Ukrainian and Moldavian SSR additionally (our No. 1798/B of June 2 of this year) obtained the following data:

Along the Soviet-German border

May 20 this year in Biala Podlaska... the location of the headquarters of the infantry division, the 313th and 314th infantry regiments, the personal regiment of Marshal Goering and the headquarters of the tank formation are noted.

In the Yanov-Podlyasky area, 33 km northwest of Brest, pontoons and parts for twenty wooden bridges are concentrated. <...>

May 31 at st. Sanok arrived a trainload of tanks. <...>

On May 20, up to a hundred aircraft took off from the Modlin airfield.

Along the Soviet-Hungarian border

In the town of Brustura ... there were two Hungarian infantry regiments and in the Khust area - German tank and motorized units.

170

Along the Soviet-Romanian border

<...> During May 21-24, they proceeded from Bucharest to the Soviet-Romanian border: through st. Pashkans - 12 echelons of German infantry with tanks; through st. Craiova - two echelons with tanks; at st. Three echelons of infantry arrived at Dormenashti and at st. Borshchov two echelons with heavy tanks and vehicles.

Up to 250 German planes were noted at the airfield in the Buzeu area. <...>

In Dorokhoisky Uyezd, the gendarmerie and local authorities proposed to the population that a bomb shelter be built near each house within five days.

The General Staff of the Red Army has been informed.

Reason: telegraphic reports of districts.

People's Commissar of Internal Affairs of the USSR Beria

These are just three of many Soviet pre-war intelligence documents, and they are unequivocally disturbing. The Abwehr, although new units also arrived in the Soviet border districts - the Baltic, Western and Kiev special ones, could not fill their intelligence reports with an alarming sound. There were no objective grounds for alarm. And specially

By the spring of 1941, there was no need for Canaris to fake fakes about Stalin's imaginary aggressiveness by the spring of 1941 - Hitler already decided to strike.

But he decided so, not least thanks to Canaris' disinformation of a different kind, which deliberately underestimated the military and economic potential of the USSR.

By the way... As far as I remember, in one of his books (if I'm not mistaken, in "Suicide") Vladimir Rezun states that Hitler's entourage pushed him to war with us. Of course, it is important for ex-Major Rezun, the intelligence service creature, to shield another intelligence service creature, Admiral Canaris, and to distribute the virtual sole responsibility of the Anglo-American agent of influence Canaris for provoking Hitler to the Fuhrer's entire entourage.

171

But who could influence the Fuhrer in this way?

Hess? He was not an authority for the Fuhrer in military matters, like Himmler, Goebbels, Bormann.

Goering—there is reliable evidence of this—was afraid of a war with Russia.

What can we say about the generals, who, in fact, without exception, were skeptical about the idea of such a war, like the economic leadership of the Reich?

No, the most important role was played by the provocations of Canaris, undertaken by him on the instructions of Washington and London, for which it was extremely important to pit Russia and Germany precisely in 1941. But the guilt of Canaris for expanding the scale of the war is of subordinate importance in relation to the guilt for fanning the war fire of the two Anglo-Saxon "democracies". And this exposes them to history not in the best possible way.

Here, apparently, ex-Major Rezun receives the task to whitewash the admiral from intelligence as far as possible, thereby whitewashing the country of his current residence, as well as her "big brother" from over the ocean.

But, as already mentioned, Hitler himself leaned towards war. One can recall, for example, as an illustration, the post-war confessions of Gustav Hilger, former adviser to the German embassy in Moscow. In his memoirs, he wrote that in the last weeks before the war, the work of the embassy lost its meaning - Berlin ceased to be interested in reporting, and Hilger personally killed time in reading and discussions with Ambassador Schulenburg.

I suggest that the admirers of the author of the "Icebreaker" think carefully about what has been said above, not really trusting the "discoveries" of the "idol". Perhaps then it will become clear to them that the idea of a preventive war of the USSR against Germany — especially for the specific year 1941 — was deeply flawed from all points of view: geopolitical, political, military-political, military, economic, and even moral, although the last point of view in a reasonable state policy can not always be taken into account.

172

Geopolitically, the USSR did not improve its positions as a result of a preventive strike. By the summer of 1941, virtually bloodless and without serious hostilities, except for the Finnish campaign, the Soviet Union had already reached natural geopolitical boundaries, returning Western Ukraine, Western Belarus, the Baltic States, Bessarabia and the old Russian territories transferred by Alexander I to the Grand Duchy of Finland at the beginning of the 19th century. In addition, the USSR included Northern Bukovina in its composition. That is, by the summer of 1941, geopolitical tasks were solved without a big war.

In political and military-political terms, the USSR, in the event of a preventive war with Germany, voluntarily moved from the advantageous position of a neutral non-belligerent country at that time, which retained wide opportunities for foreign policy maneuver, to the dubious and dangerous position of a belligerent country. Moreover, the danger for Russia hid not only in the possibility of its failure in the war with Germany. The sole success in the war with Germany in 1941 was no less dangerous for the USSR. Later I will explain in detail what I mean.

In addition, a preventive strike would make the USSR an aggressor, which Stalin did not want to allow.
no way.

In a purely military and military-technical sense, a preventive war between the USSR and Germany in 1941 would mean an adventure due to the incomplete readiness of the Red Army, which in 1941 was in the stage of active rearmament and reformation. All this is well enough known, and I will here refer to only one representative example, which I have already cited once. The future twice Hero of the Soviet Union Army General Dmitry Danilovich Lelyushenko in the spring of 1941 was appointed commander of the 21st mechanized corps, which was to be formed as part of two tank and one motorized rifle divisions. According to the state, the corps stationed in the south-west of Pskov

173

oblast in the Daugavpils direction, was supposed to have 1031 tanks of different brands. There were 98 BT-7s and T-26s in stock. New heavy tanks KV and new medium tanks T-34 were just beginning to enter the corps. At the end of May 1941, Lelyushenko had a conversation in Moscow with the head of the Main Armored Directorate of the Red Army, Lieutenant General Fedorenko. In response to a question from Commander Lelyushenko about when the tanks would arrive, Fedorenko said: "Don't worry! According to the plan, your corps should be completed in 1942."

The situation with the 21st mechanized corps was typical. So, it turns out that Stalin first intended to hit Hitler in July 1941 with understaffed corps, win a preventive war with understaffed corps, and only then in 1942, already in the places of the new deployment of corps in East Prussia, near Berlin, in the area of Munich, etc., to fully equip the winning corps with new equipment?

Absurd?

Perhaps...

But it is precisely this variant that follows from the scenario of Suvorov and the rest of the Suvorovites. Although only one phrase from the declassified in 1990 transcript of the Meeting of the top leadership of the Red Army on December 23-31, 1940 completely refutes the fabrications of the "Suvorovites" - "Rezunovists". Actually, all the other materials of this meeting also refute them, but I will quote only one phrase from the report of the same Yakov Nikolaevich Fedorenko:

"A particular difficulty in 1941 will lie in the fact that a number of tank formations will not receive materiel and will have to learn from a minimum amount of material parts."

After all, it was a report to the People's Commissar of the Red Army six months before, as it turned out, a real war, a report "no fools", not to the public - top secret.

174

And where is the readiness of armored formations of the Red Army invented by Rezun for "motorway" raids on imperial autobahns and Italian motorways in 1941?

Well, how much longer will the gullible reader believe Rezunov's nonsense?

In economic terms, the preventive war against Germany in 1941 was also irrational for the USSR. It deprived us of much-needed supplies of industrial equipment, which we were supposed to receive from Germany and received, although we actually received it with a scratch - Hitler was about to start the war, and this affected the pace of deliveries. However, they were, these deliveries. And most importantly, they were counted on in the USSR.

To prove the absurdity of statements about Stalin's aggressiveness in 1941, one can cite a lot of data, some of which are in my previous books, as well as in the books of many domestic and Western, including German, authors. In this regard, for example, the already old book "From Brest-Litovsk to Barbarossa" by the West German historians F. Krummacker and G. Lange is interesting. They admit that in 1941 the Red Army was not even ready for defense, let alone offensive.

I hope that what has been said here is enough to decisively put aside the version of Stalin's plan for a preventive strike against Germany in the summer of 1941.

Nevertheless, we are faced with the task of analyzing an improbable version of the past. Therefore, let us ask ourselves: "And how would everything have been if Stalin, nevertheless, had struck? And he struck as described by Viktor Suvorov and a number of other "Suvorovites", that is, unexpectedly for the Germans and preventively - in 1941?"

Well, let's think, starting with a brief analysis of another version of the "Suvorov" style, that is, with the approval

175

the birth of a new "ally" of Vladimir Rezun, Mark Solonin, that in any eventuality, including in the event of a preemptive strike by the Red Army, the Red Army would have expected only defeat in 1941, because the command of the Red Army from top to bottom it was incompetent, and the Red Army soldiers did not want to fight for the "tyrant Stalin".

It's funny that according to "Suvorov"-Rezun, everything would have been the opposite - Stalin's preventive strike against Hitler in the summer of 1941 would have meant, according to Rezun, the rapid defeat of the Third Reich. Solonin claims the opposite, but at the same time receives Rezun's compliments.

I have already analyzed the "discoveries" of both Rezun and Solonin in my book "10 Myths about 1941" and here I will analyze only one passage of Solonin. He reports the figures for the loss (in percent) of military equipment and vehicles in the summer of 1941, and on the basis that the loss of tanks, artillery, etc. exceeded the losses of vehicles almost twice, draws approximately the following "profound" conclusion. Like, on a tank, and even more so on a cannon, you won't go far, and you need to shoot from them, and this delays the flight to the rear and complicates it. And on the poorest "one and a half" one can quickly wave a hundred or two kilometers to the side, opposite from the front. So the Red Army soldiers were throwing tanks, not wanting to "defend the tyrant" on them. But cars - no, they didn't abandon them. They draped on them from the Germans. Therefore, they say, much more cars survived than tanks.

"Analysts" like Solonin "forget" at the same time that although military motor vehicles participate in supporting combat operations and also suffer losses, they do not participate directly in hostilities - unlike tanks, aircraft and artillery pieces. Therefore, the losses of vehicles, even taking into account the losses of motorized infantry vehicles, objectively turn out to be less than the losses of military equipment.

176

According to the "logic" of Solonin, the Soviet Air Force should have had the least losses. If on an emka or a lorry it was possible to quickly escape to the rear, then on an airplane it could be done ten times faster. However, Soviet pilots from the first day of the war fought, not deserted. And a number of negative examples are not treason, but stupidity and sloppiness

part of aviation commanders - there is no general conclusion about the heroic behavior of the Soviet Air Force cancels.

That, in fact, is all about the fabrications of Solonin.

But how could virtual events develop in 1941 in the event of a preemptive, preventive strike by the Red Army? To develop not "according to Suvorov", not "according to Solonin", but taking into account objectively existing factors and circumstances?

I must say that the question is interesting. And for me personally, it is interesting, especially since I had never thought about this side of the problem before, always realizing that reports about Stalin's allegedly aggressive plans in 1941, thwarted allegedly by Hitler's preemptive strike, are just pitiful and crudely slapped fabrications. But it turns out that the provocations of the rebels can also serve well if we consider them as starting points for new, completely balanced and historically correct reflections. Indeed, for a complete and comprehensive analysis of the situation in 1941, it is useful not in a provocative, not slanderous, not "black" propaganda way, but to objectively consider the possible consequences of the USSR's preventive strike against Germany in the summer of 1941.

At the same time, I am not inclined to juggle the numbers of units and formations, play "toy soldiers" on cards, moving mechanized corps and infantry divisions back and forth, and build myself out of a great commander, as a number of historians do today, briskly writing about that war, but hardly familiar with army practice, even in the scope of the course of a young soldier.

It has long been said that "everyone fancies himself a strategist, seeing the battle from the side", but today such "strategists"

177

divorced so many that, in addition to the immortal lines of Shota Rustaveli, I want to add, not in rhyme, but in essence: "Especially when the "strategists" see the battle not just from the side, but from a decent historical distance, knowing the course past combat operations, and the exact location of troops, and the situation on the maps, and the final results of individual operations and campaigns in general".

Then it is easy to be Macedonian, Moritz of Saxony and Napoleon and Moltke put together.

Nevertheless, without pretending to be a qualified General Staff officer, I would venture to state as an initial thesis that the formation of our troops by the summer of 1941 was preferable for active defense with a transition to a counteroffensive than for a preventive offensive. The deployment of units and formations of the Wehrmacht was exactly the opposite in this respect - it was the deployment of a preventive strike. Since the German authors who wrote about the Second World War after the end of this war knew who had "the snout in the gun", they did not particularly emphasize the analysis of the initial deployment of troops on both sides of the border. On the other hand, a number of authors appeared in *Rossiyan* who saw in the concentration of the majority of the mechanized corps of the Western Special Military District in the Bialystok salient as evidence of their readiness for a preventive strike against the Germans. Boris Shaptalov, for example, writes about this in his surprisingly biased book "Trial by War".

However, the configuration of the Soviet-German border with two protrusions in the area of Bialystok and Lvov that had developed by 1941 favored the Wehrmacht's flank attacks on the Red Army rather than the Red Army's flank attacks on the Wehrmacht. It is always more convenient to attack in converging than in divergent directions.

Here, perhaps, it is appropriate to recall the situation that had developed on the Soviet-German front by the summer of 1943 in the area of the Kursk salient. The Soviet troops then prepared for a strategic defense against Ver-

178

mast, ready to hit under the base of the "ledge" from the flanks. In 1943, events unfolded for the Germans differently than in 1941, but their very idea of the main strategic strike in the summer of 1943 in the form of an offensive in two converging directions proves exactly what was said above, that is, objectively new situation for the Red Army in the summer of 1941.

However, with all this, the possibilities for our successful preventive strike against the Germans in 1941 were, of course, considerable. And, without going into the possible development of events in the way that not only literary "commanders" do, but also - on duty and profession - professional military leaders on the maps of command post and field exercises, we can give an initially successful assessment of the situation which could have been the result of a preventive strike by the Red Army in the summer of 1941.

But only initially successful, since we could not count on sustainable strategic, and even more so geopolitical success as a result of a preventive strike against Germany.

What could we gain and what could we achieve in the course of such a strike?

Most likely, the initial serious success of the Red Army would have been ensured. After all, troops sent into battle on a previously given order, and troops alerted to repel an unexpected attack, are two fundamentally different states of the armed forces.

In reality, in the summer of 1941, the Red Army found itself for the most part in the second position. Why it happened so, I will not say now, noting only that Stalin is not to blame. But now we are considering a more fun for the Red Army, albeit virtual, option - our carefully planned preventive strike in the summer of 1941.

Well, much of this option, which is more beneficial to us, is unambiguous and indisputable, especially in terms of aviation and tanks.

179

So, there is no doubt that with a preventive strike by the Red Army, those approximately 800 aircraft that we lost on airfields on the very first day of the real war would have taken off in time - at the hour indicated by Stalin - and would have inflicted considerable damage on the Germans. in air battles with Luftwaffe fighters and in bombing attacks on ground targets. And this, after all, is in addition to those thousands of our aircraft that survived after the real June 22, 1941.

Several thousand tanks that we lost in the first weeks of a real war without corresponding damage to the Germans would also have dealt more effective strikes against Wehrmacht formations not expecting a Russian attack than actually happened after June 22, 1941. Now, after all, it would not be the German tank "wedges" that would rush to the east, but the tank "rams" of the Red Army that would break through the German positions in the west.

If the Germans had not captured the huge military reserves concentrated in the border districts, the Germans would not have got several million rifles, the shortage of which had a great impact in the real year 1941. By the way, their strange concentration in special border districts rather proves - contrary to the interpretation of "Suvorov" - the presence in the Red Army and in 1941 of unexposed "Tukhachevskys" and Trotskyists, rather than the aggressive intentions of Stalin.

After all, if Stalin had decided to strike, millions of rifles would not have been stored in warehouses, but would have hung - a matter of weeks before the strike - on rifle belts behind the backs of the infantrymen. And uh, anyway, these rifles would be in the interior districts, which were supposed to produce the largest number of called-up reservists and recruits. But if Stalin did not prepare a blow, and in the leadership of the Red Army, in the State Planning Committee of the USSR, in the Council of People's Commissars there were still unidentified enemies of the Soviet power (who, alas, remained there), then store millions (!)

small arms closer to the places of the preventive strike of the Germans was a reasonable measure for the "fifth column".

180

We are now considering the Goebbels-Rezun version, according to which Stalin was preparing to strike and struck. Well, if Stalin had struck, these rifles would also have been very useful to us and would also have played a positive role, like those stocks of military equipment and fuel that would have been used by us in our own preventive strike, and not got to the Germans during their preemptive strike.

And Berlin and Danzig, in the event of our preventive strike, could have been bombed not from the Baltic Islands at the limit of the radius, but from airfields on the Polish territory occupied during the offensive, which would have been much more effective and easier for the subordinates of Colonel Preobrazhensky.

And plentiful trophies in the very first days of the war would have been counted, presumably, not by the Germans, but by us ...

That is, the idea of a preventive strike by the Red Army against the Wehrmacht in the summer of 1941 seemed to have its merits. But on the whole, this idea was, as already said, vicious and stupid from all points of view.

Let's take a closer look at the incredible, but theoretically admitted by us, version of the USSR's preventive strike against the Reich. What will we see?

Full-fledged Soviet Air Force, not burning on the ground, but striking at the enemy? Air battles and air strikes?

Yes...

But all this would give us neither a decisive advantage nor air supremacy. A preventive strike by the Soviet Air Force against the Luftwaffe would only have reduced the advantage of the Germans, but the miracle would not have happened. The aircraft of the Soviet Air Force and in a preventive strike would be the same as they were, that is, for the most part, either old or new, but not yet really mastered, and from the point of view of technical reliability, not run in.

Let me remind you that our then new cannon fighters Yak-1 and LaGG-3 did not exceed the new German fighters, and the MiG-3 had only machine guns.

181

armament. At the same time, many pilots had less than 10 hours of flight time on the aircraft of the new Yak-1, MiG-3, LaGG-3, Il-2, Pe-2 brands.

The German flight and technical personnel were trained in an uncommonly more serious way, and the mass combat experience was fundamentally greater than among the Germans.

Approximately the same situation turned out to be in the summer of 1941 in the armored forces of the Red Army. Yes, with the mass of tanks that we had by the summer of 1941, it would seem that we could get serious advantages in a preventive strike. However, in reality, we would not have gained a decisive advantage here either. Old tanks were often worn out. The new tanks were little mastered and still unreliable. Thus, heavy KV tanks in 1941 were more often lost due to breakdowns on the march than in battles.

Old tanks, as a rule, did not have a walkie-talkie, like old fighters. Therefore, the success of a preventive strike by the Air Force and tank formations of the Red Army could become in 1941 only tactical or operational. In other words, it would not become decisive, strategic.

After all, you cannot properly master a new technique in a matter of weeks, and you cannot quickly make up for its shortage. The chassis of the KV would not become more reliable from the fact that they would be thrown into battle not to repel someone else's strike, but to develop their own preventive one.

And tankers with pilots from the fact that they would have hit first would not have been more experienced. Even the great virtual "commander" "Viktor" "Suvorov" could not have installed walkie-talkies on old tanks and planes overnight.

That is, even in the event of a preventive strike by the Red Army in the summer of 1941, there could be no talk of any victorious march to Berlin on "high-speed" "highway" tanks "designed" by Suvorov. The overall potential of the Red Army in 1941 could not ensure such success even with the most successful development of events.

Now I am just writing an article in the next military-historical collection of the Yauza publishing house and I cannot give detailed, voluminous factography, from

182

rushing by the spring and summer of 1941, so I simply refer the interested reader to, for example, two good Soviet monographs, published in a fairly massive circulation - 50,000 copies each.

In the collective work "The Initial Period of the War" (Voenizdat, 1974, under the general editorship of General of the Army S.P. Ivanov), not much space is devoted to the analysis of the beginning of the Great Patriotic War, but there are interesting information and discussions about preparations for war and about waging the Second World War by all the great military powers, including the USSR.

In particular, it says that in the spring of 1941, the General Staff of the Red Army developed a plan for the defense of the state border, on the basis of which each of the border military districts had to develop its own specific plan of combat operations and submit it for approval to the General Staff. Such plans were developed from June 5 to June 20, 1941 and received by the General Staff for approval.

As you can see, the defense plan was carefully and in detail worked out at all levels, in contrast to those thesis and offensive in essence "Considerations on the plan for the strategic deployment of the Armed Forces of the Soviet Union" dated May 15, 1941, which were written by A. .M. Vasilevsky by hand, not approved by anyone, but which Rezun and his "Suvorovites" brandish at all corners as evidence of the alleged readiness of the USSR for a preemptive strike in July 1941

of the year.

Monograph of 1977 "Rear Services of the Soviet Armed Forces in the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945" under the general editorship of General of the Army S.K. Kurkotkin is in many respects unique to this day, and it contains quite abundant and conclusive statistics, which also confirms that in 1941 the readiness of the Red Army to conduct initiative offensive operations in the style there was no need to speak of a preventive strike.

Accordingly, there was no need to talk about the deafeningly successful results of such a strike.

183

They wouldn't exist!

What would happen?

Most likely, after the first, at best, operational, our successes, the confrontation would have passed into the phase of protracted battles, conducted with varying success. These battles would be mutually difficult and mutually exhausting. At the same time, taking into account all the objective advantages

Wehrmacht in 1941, he, having recovered from the first setbacks, could move the front line back - to the East. And reach, if not to the Volga, then to the Dnieper.

Hitler, of course, would not have won the war against Russia even in this case. He could become a winner only in alliance with Russia against the Anglo-Saxons. However, the position of the USSR from any point of view would be difficult. A preemptive strike by the Red Army in 1941 would not have led either to a triumphant rush of "motorway" tanks designed by "Viktor" "Suvorov" to Berlin, or to a quick defeat of the Third Reich. It would not have led to the collapse and defeat of the Soviet Armed Forces. Most likely, the situation would have turned out to be mediocre - due to our stupid decision to launch a preventive strike, and its development would also have been mediocre. With a preventive strike, Stalin would not have solved the urgent foreign policy and military-political problems, but would simply have transferred them to a stupid plane.

And that's why...

If in 1941 Stalin would have put himself in the position of a formal aggressor, and Hitler would have been a formal victim of Soviet aggression in 1941, the world military-political situation could not develop in the best way for the USSR.

For the Fuhrer, it turned out to be a losing one in any case. But even for the USSR, in the event of a first strike by the USSR, it would be very difficult for us and unfavorable. And the greater our success in a preventive strike, the greater the danger we would be exposed to.

And there would be nothing paradoxical in this - if you know the background of the then world situation.

184

World War II was conceived and planned in Washington long before it began. Actually, it was programmed by the "peaceful" Versailles Treaty of 1919. And the expected result of the planned war was to be the mutual exhaustion of Russia and Germany, and as a result of this, the undivided world dictates of the United States with England and France as "tows" under the overseas "root".

In accordance with the overseas war plan, Hitler had to be provoked against the USSR in such a way as to achieve Hitler's blow to Russia. Ideally, the Reich and the USSR should have mutually weakened themselves, after which the USA would have come to Europe as an absolute decisive force. A less convenient, but acceptable option for the United States would be the complete defeat of Soviet Russia by the Reich. Then the United States would have had to carry out a victorious war against the Reich in Europe almost single-handedly, that is, with heavy human and material losses. But this would not be very critical for the US capitalist elite - the US electorate would ensure both the reproduction of human reserves and the financing of additional military spending.

But the variant of the strategic success of the USSR in 1941 for the West, for the USA, for the world Golden Elite would be absolutely unacceptable.

Let's consider two options. The first one is close to "Rezunovsky". The Red Army, as a result of a preventive strike, is advancing deep into Poland and approaching the borders of the Reich. The fighting is mutually difficult, but there is a chance for our final victory in 1941.

The second option, already mentioned in passing, is the return advance of the Wehrmacht after our onslaught to the line, for example, Narva-Dnieper from Smolensk to Kyiv-Odessa. Here the front line could have stabilized until the spring of 1942, after which our successful and victorious offensive to Berlin would have been more than likely - after all, by the campaign of 1942, in this case, the Red Army would have received qualitatively and quantitatively

185

a completely different military-technical image, and the Wehrmacht would be approximately the same, that is, qualitatively weaker than the Red Army.

All this time, the British would not have been conducting serious actions against the Reich, but with the indicated strategic success of the Red Army, peace negotiations between the Germans and the British and the conclusion of peace would have been almost inevitable.

Moreover, it would not be a separate peace, because in the version we are considering, the USSR would not be an ally of the Anglo-Saxons.

In other words, a single-handed success in a preventive war against Germany would be no less dangerous for the USSR than the failure of such an action.

As mentioned above, for the Anglo-Saxons, and above all for the United States, only two options were acceptable.

The first, ideal one, is that the Reich destroys the USSR, exhausting itself in the process. The US then easily defeats the Germans.

The second, admissible, is that the Reich defeats the USSR, remaining quite strong, but not strong enough to win the war against the USA in alliance with England. The United States then secures victory for itself by putting in a lot of effort.

The option of defeating the Reich by the forces of a victorious and growing Russia alone was absolutely unacceptable and unacceptable for the United States. And therefore, if our successes of the virtual 1941 would lead us to Berlin, the Anglo-Saxons would not only instantly curtail their confrontation with the Reich, but, very likely, would blockade with it in order to fight the "Bolshevik invasion."

Yes, all this would be real, because in the event of a preventive strike against the Germans, Russia would have a reputation as an aggressor, and our advance into Europe would immediately consolidate all the anti-communist forces of Europe - from Finland and England to Vichy France, Hungary, Romania, Italy and so on.

Let's remember how we wanted, but it was very prickly, eng

186

Losaxes to conclude a separate peace with the Germans even at the beginning of 1945! And there was only one reason - the fear of the "Soviets" coming to Europe and the fear of the "Sovietization" of Europe. After all, the anti-Nazism of the West was forced, while anti-communism, anti-Sovietism and Russophobia were innate, organically characteristic of the West.

Even in the summer of 1945, Churchill kept an unarmed (!) half-million (!!) German army in Norway. He kept it just in case, but definitely against the Russians, who in 1945 were legally allies of England. |

What can we say about such a scenario in 1941, when not General Guderian would have rushed to Moscow, but General Pavlov to Berlin, and we would not have been allies of the Britons?

Yes, Churchill would immediately become the Fuhrer's best friend!

Most often it is forgotten, but in vain it is forgotten that the USA, England and France during the Soviet-Finnish war of 1939-1940 were on the verge of entering the war with the USSR on the side of the Finns, that these countries then initiated the exclusion of the USSR from the League of Nations and actually officially broke off diplomatic relations with us. And in the spring of 1940, the British and French seriously planned air strikes against Baku, and then ground operations.

In the event of the virtual "European" victories of the Red Army in 1941, these plans could receive new content and be realized. And after such strikes, the Allies could conclude peace with Germany and strike at the USSR while coordinating their actions with the Germans.

And it would be bad for us then after all the "highway" successes of the "strategist" Rezun.

Thus, summing up our analysis, we can draw the following main conclusions.

1. The thesis that Stalin was preparing the first strike against the Reich in the summer of 1941 is completely anti-historical, provocative and false. Such a blow was unbelievable from any point of view, including due to its complete inexpediency for the USSR in the situation of 1941.

187

2. Consideration of the thesis about the possibility of a preventive war of the USSR against Germany in 1941 is admissible only for the completeness of the analysis of the then situation.

3. A preventive strike by the Red Army in 1941 would not have led to either triumph or the defeat of the Soviet Armed Forces, but would have led to heavy battles with varying success and their probable transfer by the autumn of 1941 to the territory of the USSR to the line of the Dnieper.

4. Considering the theoretical situation after the preventive strike of the USSR in 1941, we can say that in 1942 one could expect an initially successful spring campaign for the USSR in 1942, but the development of success could lead to the blocking of all anti-communist forces with the Reich Europe, including England, and to the organization of joint military operations against the USSR under patronage or even direct participation in the European war already in 1942 by the United States of America.

5. The joint aggression of the West and the USA against the USSR, which became the result of the preventive war of 1941 of the USSR against Germany, would sharply worsen our strategic position and draw the USSR into a difficult and protracted war, the most likely outcome of which would be the expulsion of the aggressor from the territory USSR, but nothing more. The potential of the USSR as a world power would be undermined for a long time. |

In general, we can conclude that after the refusal of Soviet Russia from a strategic alliance with nationalist Germany, the most rational option for the USSR remained the option of ensuring success in a probable defensive war in 1941 and abandoning an offensive policy, at least until the complete rearmament of the Red Army in 1942.

Such a decision - for defense in the event of a possible war - was actually taken by Stalin for 1941.

188

Only the frankly aggressive preparations of Germany along the Soviet borders and information about these preparations by the reconnaissance of the border troops of the NKVD of the USSR, constantly transmitted to Stalin by People's Commissar Beria, prompted Stalin to urgently intensify our military activities from about June 18-19, 1941.

To this day, there is much unclear in the collisions of the pre-war situation in 1941, but I have repeatedly written in my books that when analyzing it, and especially when analyzing the last pre-war week, the most important reference points should be considered:

* the growing flow of information during April-June 1941 about the large-scale preparations of the Germans and the concentration of their troops in the border zone, received from border informants of mass intelligence of the border troops of the NKVD of the USSR;

* Stalin's gradual realization of Hitler's readiness to start a war in the summer of 1941; |

- * preliminary political sounding of Hitler, undertaken by Stalin in the form of publication of the TASS Statement of June 13-14, 1941];
- * the final political sounding of Hitler, undertaken by Stalin on June 17 or 18, 1941, in the form of a proposal rejected by Hitler to immediately send Molotov to Berlin;
- * organization by Beria and the leadership of the Red Army Air Force on June 17 or 18, 1941, on behalf of Stalin, a flight along the border of the commander of the 43rd Fighter Aviation Division of the ZapOVO, Colonel G.N.
- * the decision, no later than June 19, 1941, of Stalin to carry out urgent military measures, including the withdrawal of the command of the Western and Kyiv Special Military Districts to front-line command posts.

189

I wrote about this more than once, and I also spoke about this in the documentary film "Who screwed up the beginning of the war?", Filmed in 2008 according to my conceptual development by the Nashe Kino association, commissioned by NTV.

Yes, a lot is still unclear. But it can already be said that the catastrophic events of late June - early July 1941 were due to a number of such objective and subjective reasons, including miscalculations by the top generals, which make it possible to remove from Stalin personally not only the accusation of intending to inflict in the summer of 1941, a sudden preventive strike against Germany, but also an accusation of responsibility for the failures of the initial period of the war.

Stalin did not miss the beginning of the war. However, for the topic touched upon above, no less important is the indisputable fact that Stalin did not prepare a preventive war in the summer of 1941 - from any point of view.

Alexander Patients

TILZIT DEAD END

if we talk about plans for a preventive strike, the Council

Union for Germany in the 1940s, you can

notice one interesting feature. With the light hand of the British historian (Soviet traitor Suvorov) Rezun, it is commonly believed that Hitler was only a couple of weeks ahead of Stalin, as a result of which the war lasted four bloody years instead of ending in four weeks. A sort of blitzkrieg in the Soviet way. But then it follows that Stalin chose almost the most inopportune moment of all possible for an attack on Germany, specifically waiting for the concentration of the main forces of the Wehrmacht in the east. For what? To defeat them "with little blood, with a mighty blow"? Where is the guarantee that it will work? A fully mobilized, rested army is not an adversary against which dubious ideas should be tested. But wouldn't it be easier to try to achieve your goals in a more favorable environment?

Such a favorable situation developed for the Red Army more than once, and the dispersal of German units and formations could always be considered a key factor. For the first time we see a similar situation in September 1939 during the so-called "liberation campaign" in Poland. By this time, the Wehrmacht divisions were evenly "smeared" literally over the entire territory of the country, fairly battered by battles and marches. On the contrary, the Red Army acted in concentrated, compact strike groups, which did not conduct any battles, so, small local skirmishes, no more. Therefore she had

191

every chance to grind the German divisions before the Germans figure out what exactly started. There was one more nuance that worked for the Red Army. The famous Panzerwaffe had not yet turned into a real force, the coherence of the panzer divisions was far from ideal, and the structure turned out to be as cumbersome and clumsy as ours. But the number of tanks was very unequal, and the quality too. Therefore, the chances of success were quite good, only surprise was required.

The second, simply ideal, period must be considered

June 1940, when the Wehrmacht was bogged down in the fighting in France. In this case, only weak cordons had to be crushed, and it was not at all necessary to wait until the Germans were up to their necks in Operation Sea Lion, especially since they did not plan to send all their forces to England. I believe that this was an ideal opportunity to stick a knife in the back of Hitler, and the Germans had no chance to repel this blow. The tank divisions that would have to be transferred from southern France would at best meet the Soviet mechanized corps in the area of the Seelow Heights, and it is not yet a fact that they would be able to stop them. In fact, such a variant of the war would result in a battle between the Soviet tank forces and the Luftwaffe, so the dive squads could arrive on the Eastern Front in just a couple of days. At the same time, in the conditions of full readiness of Soviet aviation and its numerical superiority, the success of the Luftwaffe does not at all look guaranteed. wait until the summer of 1941, when the situation for such an event became almost the worst possible. And yet, let's try to imagine how everything could have turned out if you believe in the mythical date of July 6, 1941. We _ But no, it itched for some reason offer you a translation of an excerpt from the book of the famous American historian David Glantz "Thunderstorm without rain" - "Ory Tÿpaerÿÿiogt".

192

Early summer morning somewhere on the territory of the Governor General... The Wehrmacht continued to prepare for the Eastern campaign, in particular, the headquarters of the 41st Panzer Corps worked out a schedule for the advance of units to the Soviet-German border and carried on dreary correspondence with the headquarters of the 77th bomber squadron, which flatly refused to support the actions of General Reinhardt's tanks. Even the intervention of the commander of the 4th tank group Hoepner did not help, the commander of the 1st air fleet, General Oberst Keller, stood to the death, claiming that he had his own tasks, which were higher and more important than supporting some kind of corps.

But all this peaceful bureaucratic idyll shattered into dust when, at 4 o'clock in the morning, all of a sudden, Soviet bombs rained down on peacefully sleeping German airfields. The 4th and 6th mixed air divisions attacked Lindenthal, Grakenen and Blumenfeld, where the aircraft of the 54th fighter squadron were based. Although the Soviet planes had to fly over the territory occupied by the German troops, the Germans simply did not have time to react in time, and it all came down to the indiscriminate firing of anti-aircraft guns. According to the memoirs of one of the pilots of the squadron:

"Soviet aircraft in the very first sortie dealt a crushing blow to our aviation units at the Lindenthal airfield. The bombs fell on the Me-109 fighters lined up along the runway in front of their shelters. Soviet I-16 escort fighters attacked airfields together with SB-3 dive bombers (so in the text!) and destroyed most of the German aircraft on the ground. Our fighters that managed to take off were shot down on takeoff or immediately after it."

The airfields where the aircraft of the 1st, 76th and 77th bomber squadrons were based suffered less damage, although there were losses there as well. The idea of the Soviet team

The idea was obvious: to deprive Army Group North of air cover, after which the bombers, even if they risked acting independently, would become easy prey for Soviet fighters, and the troops would be completely defenseless against attacks from the air. Recall that only the 133rd and 164th anti-aircraft regiments were allocated to the entire 4th tank group.

Simultaneously with the attack on the airfields, Soviet troops crossed the border almost along its entire length. The main blow of the North-Western Front was inflicted just in the zone of the 41st mechanized corps on the left flank of the 4th tank group. As it became known later, the shock fist was part of the 12th mechanized corps of the Red Army. One should not be deceived by the fictitious equality of forces: corps against corps, in two tank divisions of the German corps there were 390 tanks, and 160 of them were type 35 (I), and another 90 were T-P, that is, almost two-thirds of the vehicles in the best case could be considered limited combat-ready. But in the 12th mechanized corps there were 806 tanks, of course, it should be subtracted from here incomprehensibly how wedged tankettes and museum exhibits, like the ET-17, but still, the two-fold nominal superiority increases to five-fold actual, if we still remember about cannon armored vehicles BA-10. In addition, for the time being, the German units were mainly in the rear deployment areas and were only preparing to move into the border zone. And, as we have already noted, the Germans were actually deprived of the second of their main trump cards - air support.

In the atmosphere of chaos that reigned after the first strike of Soviet aviation, natural confusion arose, which turned into a slight panic. The commander of the 1st Air Fleet, General Oberst Keller, ordered to immediately raise scouts and prepare bomber squadrons, which almost did not suffer, for a retaliatory strike. However, the same thing happened again that had already happened during the Battle of England. Faced with unpleasant surprises,

194

tsy reacted to them is not the best way. An aircraft of the 11th reconnaissance group "discovered" a huge tank column moving in the direction of Coussin. Keller immediately ordered the aircraft of the 76th and 77th bomber squadrons to attack this convoy, about a hundred L-88 bombers were raised into the air. However, the reconnaissance information turned out to be so inaccurate that the aircraft had to scour for quite a long time in search of a target. The strike group broke up into separate detachments, and the 1st group of the 76th squadron ran into Soviet fighters. Although the L-88 was a good aircraft, but without fighter cover, it turned into a convenient target. In a matter of minutes, 5 aircraft were shot down, among the dead was the group commander, Captain von Sichart. A group of the 77th squadron in the heat of the moment almost bombed the deploying units of its own 1st Panzer Division, by some miracle they managed to avert the catastrophe at the very last moment.

The 82nd reconnaissance battalion of the 6th Panzer Division, deployed in the border zone, was instantly crushed by the blow of the Soviet 23rd Panzer Division. Actually, his commander only managed to report that he was accepting the battle, after which the connection was interrupted. As it became known later, Major Tikhonenko's 45th Tank Regiment passed through the Germans without encountering any resistance. The positions were not equipped, they simply did not exist as such, only those who managed to surrender in time survived.

General Reinhardt decided to stop the Russian advance with a counterattack from his panzer divisions, but they needed some time to prepare. Reinhardt did not want to throw tanks into the offensive blindly. At the same time, he contacted his neighbor on the right, the commander of the 56th Panzer Corps, General von Manstein. However, it immediately became clear that Manstein had a lot of his own problems, more serious ones at that. The veil of his body was also crumpled, with

195

than here the Russians brought heavy tanks into action, against which anti-tank guns were useless. The prudent Manstein reinforced the front curtain with a company of Panzerjäger 1 tank destroyers, but these light vehicles were simply crushed by the Soviet steel monsters. Therefore, Manstein, not really trying to hide his irritation, advised Reinhardt to deal with his own difficulties. The only thing that Reinhardt managed to achieve was the promise of the commander of the 77th bomber squadron, Lieutenant Colonel Reitel, to send two groups to attack Russian tanks. But Reitel immediately warned that he could not guarantee anything, since communication with the headquarters of the fighter squadron was broken, and he did not want to send his planes for slaughter, the morning flight showed how risky a flight without fighter escort could become.

As it turned out just a couple of hours later, Reitel's caution was more than justified. Soviet aviation launched a second strike on German airfields, now bomber aviation bases were attacked. It cannot be said that the Russian pilots bombed very accurately, apparently, they gave their all in the morning attack, but nevertheless, chaos reigned at the airfields of Heilingenbeil, Jesau and Wormditt. The German anti-aircraft gunners who came to their senses fired intensely and shot down about two dozen aircraft, but the immediate sortie promised by Reitel failed.

On the other hand, the planes of the 7th mixed air division literally pulverized the vanguard of the 6th tank division hastily thrown towards the Russians. General Landgraf brought forward what was at hand - the II battalion of the 11th Panzer Regiment and a company of tank destroyers. Fearing for the fate of his main forces, he detained the battalion of the 411th anti-aircraft regiment attached to the division, the result was terrible.

196

"We were attacked by dozens of Russian planes, they were literally everywhere. Bombs rained down like hail, during the first run they covered the head of the column, and the battalion commander died. The tanks tried to turn off the road to take cover in a nearby grove, but the terrain turned out to be quite swampy, and the cars crawled literally at a snail's pace, turning into excellent targets. The tank destroyers had a particularly bad time, since their crews were covered only by shields. Russian fighters, walking at low level over the very road, mercilessly shot them from machine guns. As a result of the attack, the battalion suffered very heavy losses and was forced to retreat without completing its mission."

In general, a very unpleasant situation for the Germans developed on the front of the 4th Panzer Group. During the day, Soviet troops advanced deep into German territory to a distance of up to 30 kilometers and at the same time did not meet serious resistance anywhere. Worst of all, the 1st Air Fleet, although not destroyed, suffered serious losses and was virtually paralyzed. In the evening, two squadrons of the 76th squadron, responding to Manstein's desperate calls, managed to bomb a small column of the Soviet 2nd Panzer Division, but this not only did not stop, but did not even seriously delay the Russian troops. Their superiority in strength was

too big.

At night, the German commanders tried to collect information from various sectors of the front in order to clarify the situation. The picture that emerged was the darkest. The Russians were confidently advancing along the entire border line, although the advance was uneven. The rifle corps only crossed the border, pushing back the German curtains, while the mechanized corps cut into the location of the German troops with sharp wedges, and the ultimate goal of their offensive was still not very clear. Most importantly, General Göpner faced an almost insoluble problem.

197

problem: how to stop the Russian offensive? His troops did not have time to dig in and gain a foothold, which means that only a counterattack remained, but with the colossal superiority of the Russians in

forces, this counterattack could end in disaster. It was not possible to count on the help of neighbors, since the neighboring 3rd Panzer Group from Army Group Center was in an even more difficult situation. Huge masses of Soviet tanks from the Bialystok direction with a blow to the north - here the direction was immediately determined - threatened to cut off the Hoth group. In general, it looked like the Soviet command was preparing a huge cauldron, in which the 3rd and 4th tank groups, the 16th army and part of the forces of the 9th army were supposed to be. It was she who came under attack and fell apart literally before our eyes, demands had already been received from the OKH to send an army reserve (motorized division of the SS "Totenkopf") to the south. Retreat to the fortifications in the Königsberg area? Of course, they look menacing, but will they be able to hold back the attack of a tank armada? In the meantime, not occupied by troops, they are generally useless.

General Keller was desperately trying to restore at least some order in his squadrons, which he did not succeed well. The 1st bomber squadron and several reconnaissance groups retained their relative combat readiness. Keller tried to get Goering to send reinforcements from the West, but the Luftwaffe command put out their fire. In the central sector of the front, the situation was generally catastrophic.

In a word, it was a difficult night for Oberst General Göpner. And, as if there were few other troubles, the Russians threw out several sabotage groups of paratroopers in the German rear at night, which made a commotion on the roads. One of these groups even attacked the headquarters of the 8th Panzer Division just at the moment when the corps commander Manstein rushed there. Thank God, the security company managed to repulse the attack, and Manstein remained intact, but during the attack they died

198

the chief of staff of the corps, Lieutenant-Colonel Baron von Everfeldt, and the commander of the division, General Brandenburg, which further increased the confusion.

After long hesitation Goepner. decided to be active. Reinhardt's 41st Corps was to meet the Russians with a head-on blow, while Manstein's 56th Corps was to undercut the base of the wedge. Goepner was going to stop the offensive in his zone with the forces of the Totenkopf division.

But it was smooth on paper, but they forgot about the ravines. Reinhardt managed to concentrate the mobile units of the 1st and 6th Panzer Divisions, but the corps artillery and the 3rd Anti-Aircraft Regiment, which were tasked with fighting the Russian tanks, fell behind. Therefore, willy-nilly, the main striking force became the 1st Tank Regiment of the 1st Tank Division, which was armed with T-PI tanks re-equipped with 50-mm guns. It was simply not serious to count on the rest of the cars.

At dawn, German tanks moved forward, but were immediately met with crushing fire from Russian anti-tank artillery. As it turned out, along with the 12th mechanized corps, the 10th rifle corps and the 9th anti-tank artillery brigade advanced. During the night, the Soviet commanders managed to deploy the brigade in the direction of the alleged German attack and disguise the guns. Therefore, the hasty and unprepared counterattack of the 1st Panzer Division turned out to be a form of suicide.

"The advancement of troops for a counterattack took place in conditions when the curtains of the first echelon of the tank group were retreating under the onslaught of the enemy ... The divisions of the 41st mechanized corps, even when moving to their starting lines, were subjected to strong enemy aviation. In the Tilsit area, an unexpected clash of units of the 1st Panzer Division with the enemy took place.

The enemy managed to cut it off from the 6th Panzer Division, and yet the regiments of this divisions though

199

were able to concentrate in time for a counterattack. As for the 6th Panzer Division, its units reached the designated areas three hours late, and part of its forces turned out to be tied up in repelling enemy tank attacks. Here, the 269th infantry division of the corps also fought fierce battles with the enemy. The start of the counterattack had to be shifted by three hours. The actions of the 41st mechanized corps practically turned into an oncoming battle without proper preparation."

Having run into massive fire from anti-tank guns and Soviet tanks, the 1st Panzer Division lost up to 30 T-Sh, after which it was forced to go on the defensive in order to prevent the Soviet troops from breaking through to the Neman. But when, on the afternoon of July 7, the Soviet 23rd Panzer Division itself attempted to go on the offensive, it had even more catastrophic consequences. The 144th Tank Regiment was almost completely destroyed, its commander, Colonel Kokin, was killed. After this battle, the division could no longer be considered an effective combat unit.

The main events that day played out on the southern face of the formed ledge, where Manstein's 56th mechanized corps tried to advance. By the evening of the previous day, the German troops were driven out of the Neman, but the bridges across the river were not blown up "by mutual agreement", each of the parties hoped to use them for their offensive. It was over these bridges that a major air battle broke out early in the morning. General Keller managed to put together a composite fighter group "Hrabak" overnight, which included the remnants of the 54th squadron. This group covered the battered, but still formidable 4 bomber groups of the 76th and 77th squadrons, sent to attack the Soviet troops on the offensive fronts of the 56th corps. The 1st bomber squadron was firmly bogged down in battles on the coastal sector of the front. Keller tried to get at least one squadron from the Luftwaffe command

200

rilyu dive bombers, but he was flatly refused. Things were even worse in the zone of Army Groups Center and South, and now the dive squadrons were trying to help the 17th Army repel the Russian offensive in the direction of Lublin. In general, the only area where even a symbolic success was indicated was the Brest area, where the 2nd Panzer Group not only repelled the first Russian attack, but even advanced into Soviet territory. However, even "Swift Heinz" Guderian began to hesitate, since the offensive of his tanks, in the absence of corresponding strikes by the 3rd Panzer Group of Hoth, lost all meaning. Guderian could probably go further, but that would only lead to the complete isolation of his group. Therefore, the 3rd Panzer Group continued to stagnate. In the southern sector of the front, the Romanian 3rd Army, without even engaging in battle, began a hasty retreat, exposing the left flank of the German 11th Army, which immediately found itself in an extremely dangerous situation.

But when German planes arrived in the indicated area, it turned out that the Soviet command had exactly the same plan and sent the 7th and 8th mixed air divisions, reinforced by the 21st air defense regiment, to attack Manstein's troops. The sky over the Neman turned into a blazing furnace, here and there it was crossed out by black tails of smoke trailing behind the downed planes. Of course, the Me-109 fighters surpassed the old Soviet I-16s in their characteristics, but, being three times inferior in number, they could not do anything, even though they were still tasked with protecting their bombers. During this air battle, the Germans lost up to 20 fighters and 50 bombers, Soviet losses were about one and a half times higher, and the Germans could be satisfied if after that the remnants of the 54th fighter squadron did not melt away, as if lump of sugar in boiling water. The bombardment of positions of the 3rd mechanized corps also failed. The Soviet bombers still managed to attack the 8th Panzer Division, but the raid was weak.

201

was, and the only result was the postponement of the start of the German offensive by two hours.

Manstein's troops crossed the Neman, and the offensive was led by the corps commander himself, who replaced the deceased commander of the 8th division. But immediately the Germans were met by the 2nd Panzer Division. As a result, Manstein and his soldiers found themselves in an extremely dangerous position, as the attack was led by Russian super-heavy KV-1 tanks. The main tank of the division was the weak Czech 38(0), which could not compete with Russian vehicles in any way.

"Crouching in shallow trenches, under road bridges and in ditches, or even in the middle of the field, the German soldiers waited for the approach of enemy tanks. The wait turned into real torture, as our long-range artillery shelled these tanks, unaware that they were shelling their own infantrymen at the same time, lucky those who managed to take cover under bridges and in other shelters. They could observe what was happening without being noticed by the enemy. Giant tanks were approaching with a roar, rapidly growing in size. One of them came across a small swamp in which our R7KU-384 got stuck. Without a moment's hesitation, the black monster ran over the helpless tank. The same fate befell the German 150-mm howitzer, which did not manage to escape in time. As the KV-1s approached, the howitzer fired at them point-blank without causing any harm. One of the tanks went straight for her, and the howitzer hit him in the frontal armor. A bright flash flickered, and there was a thunderclap as the projectile exploded. The tank stopped as if struck by lightning. The gunners breathed a sigh of relief, and one of them said: "He's finished." "Yes, this one got his own," the crew commander agreed. But then they literally turned green, as someone shouted: "He's moving again!" Indeed, the tank again moved forward, loudly clanging tracks. The tank crushed a heavy gun,

202

like a child's toy, he pressed it into the ground and mangled it without noticing anything. The howitzer was finished, but the crew, fortunately, managed to escape.

Manstein was saved from a complete defeat by the fact that he prudently transferred to the battlefield 2 batteries of 88-mm anti-aircraft guns of the 23rd anti-aircraft regiment attached to his corps. They managed to knock out several of these super tanks, and one of them even slipped over the bridge and almost reached the battery positions, but was stopped at the very last moment.

But the Russians continued to build up their forces and brought the 5th Panzer and 84th Mechanized Divisions into battle. As a result, the 8th Panzer Division could not withstand the pressure and retreated across the river, but now Manstein ordered the bridges to be blown up, since he did not see any prospects for an offensive. In addition, as we said, a little to the north the situation became more and more dangerous. General Halder makes the following entry in his diary on 7 July:

"It is only clear that our 41st Panzer Corps, from the very beginning located in the Tilsit region, was defeated by Russian panzer corps and that Manstein's Panzer Corps did not manage to advance north enough to undercut the base of the Russian wedge and cut out urged the Russians to withdraw. We are preparing an organized retreat, intending to cover it with tank connections."

But Halder was too optimistic about the situation. By this time, the 41st mechanized corps had already lost about 70 percent of its tanks, the position of the 56th corps was little better, not without reason, after all, Manstein resolutely abandoned any attempts to be active. Finally, Goepner's faith in success was undermined by air reconnaissance reports - for some reason

203

The Russians did not particularly try to intercept these planes. Most likely, having destroyed the strike forces of the 1st Air Fleet, they simply did not attach much importance to the actions of reconnaissance aircraft. If they succeed in intercepting them, they will intercept them, but no one was going to purposefully hunt for them. So, the scouts discovered the advance of new large Russian tank forces to the front line. It was the 28th mechanized corps, recently formed and secretly transferred to the Baltic states, as part of the 6th and 54th tank divisions, the 236th

motorized division and attached units. Another 860 tanks were preparing to fall on Hoepner's exhausted troops. As a result, in violation of the orders of the OKH, he kept the motorized division "Totenkopf" and pushed it to the front in the defense zone of the 41st mechanized corps. At the same time, General Reinhardt transferred his 36th motorized division to the threatened sector.

The morning of July 8 began with a powerful Soviet air raid on Tilsit and its environs, however, there was no need to guess where exactly the next strike would be directed. Since General Keller had no fighters left, the anti-aircraft gunners had to take the rap for everything. They tried their best and even shot down a few planes, which recklessly descended too much, but still, the hastily built defensive positions were noticeably damaged. After that, heavy artillery opened fire on the Germans. The commander of the 8th Army, Lieutenant General Sobennikov, pulled almost all of his artillery here. After an hour of artillery preparation, the tanks of the 28th Panzer Division of the 12th Mechanized Corps went on the attack.

The Germans met them with discordant artillery fire, as part of the batteries were damaged during an air raid. However, what was left was enough to stop the attack, since the Soviet tanks operated separately from the infantry. This went against the German instructions and all the experience of previous campaigns. Apparently, the Soviet commanders relied on

204

one and only factor - overwhelming superiority in forces. But, since this division was armed only with older T-26 and BT-7 tanks, its attack bogged down, and about 60 burned-out vehicles remained on the field. The Germans believed that everything would end there, no commander would allow his units to suffer such heavy losses, but they grossly underestimated the determination of General Sobennikov. In the afternoon, the 28th mechanized corps began the attack. General Reinhardt recalls:

"As could be foreseen, the enemy pulled up fresh forces and not only from Pskov, but also from Minsk and Moscow. Soon we had to defend ourselves on the northern bank of the Neman against enemy attacks, supported by one tank division. In some areas, things took a serious turn ... Finally, on July 7, the third mechanized formation arrived in the corps - the SS division "Totenkopf", but this did not alleviate our situation, since the Russian reinforcements were much more numerous.

And if the Germans still managed to beat off the first attack of the 28th corps, then the second, in which the 236th motorized division also participated, brought success to the Russians. At the same time, aviation provided great assistance to the tankers. The fighters stormed the positions of the Germans, pressing them to the ground with machine-gun fire, which allowed the tanks to come close to the hastily dug trenches. The 6th Panzer Division advanced in short bursts. The width of the division's offensive did not exceed 10 kilometers, which led to a high density of tanks in the first line, as one of the participants in the battle later recalled, the tanks moved so tightly that almost every projectile fired from German anti-tank guns reached its target. But, despite this, the corps moved forward, and as a result of the fighting on July 8, the German 41st motorized corps was forced to withdraw beyond the Neman. In general tanko

205

Hoepner's group managed to cling to the river, but the commander was horrified to expect the resumption of attacks the next day.

Reports from other sectors of the front were equally disappointing. The German troops retreated, putting up the resistance they were capable of, but retreated. However, the German generals were puzzled by the not too high pace of the advance of the Soviet units relative to the forces involved. If on the first day the Russian tank divisions advanced to a distance of 25-35 kilometers, then further the advance rate dropped to 10 kilometers per

day or even less. Of course, this was due to the increased resistance of the Germans, but there were other reasons.

Oberst General Erich Hoepner would be terribly surprised if he knew that Lieutenant General Sobennikov was waiting for tomorrow with no less fear than he himself. Sobennikov received an order from the commander of the Northwestern Front, Colonel General Kuznetsov, to cross the Neman, take Tilsit and advance south to Insterburg. Kuznetsov hoped to pincer the German group in East Prussia according to the plan. From the north the 8th Army struck in the direction of Tilsit-Insterburg-Gerdauen, and from the south the 10th Army in the direction of Allenstein-Bishufstein-Gerdauen. However, by the end of the third day of the offensive, it became clear that the Soviet troops were in the same bad condition as the German ones. During the offensive, units and subunits mixed up, in addition, the front command, frightened by its own successes, decided to take the 202nd motorized division from the 12th mechanized corps to protect itself. After a successful attack on the headquarters of the German 8th Panzer Division, Soviet generals began to see enemy paratroopers everywhere. The crown of this panic was the "landing" of paratroopers right on the streets of Kaunas.

In addition, it turned out that the haste with which the 3rd mechanized corps was handed over to the 8th Army had its downside, the corps arrived without its rear

206

Tey was still experiencing supply problems, especially with the ammunition used up during the fierce battle. Major General Kurkin informed Sobennikov that he had no more than a quarter of ammunition left, and the tanks had almost completely used up gasoline, so the next day he could only fight a defensive battle. In addition, the forced march inflicted much more losses than the attack, for example, the 5th Panzer Division lost about 60 tanks in battle, but due to various breakdowns on the roads, almost twice as many remained. The same picture was observed in the 28th mechanized corps.

But Sobennikov had no choice; no one would have forgiven him for disrupting the offensive. Therefore, at night he rushed to the headquarters of the 12th mechanized corps to personally get acquainted with the situation on the spot. What he saw did not please him at all, and Sobennikov tried to put together a shock group in order to try to cross the Neman in the morning. Oddly enough, the Germans did not blow up the bridges here either, it seems that Göpner and Reinhardt could not give up their intentions to implement at least some points of the Barbarossa plan.

A little earlier, Manstein assessed the situation much more soberly, however, for this he needed to destroy the 8th Panzer Division. But now he clearly understood that an oncoming tank battle with the overwhelming numerical superiority of the Red Army would be real suicide. The Germans still retained some qualitative superiority, thanks to more advanced communication systems, but were inferior in the quality of weapons. It quickly became clear that the Soviet 45 mm tank gun was more than effective against any German tank, unlike the short-barreled 37 mm French buggies. In France, one could still count on the help of the Luftwaffe, but the formidable Stukageschwader disappeared without a trace somewhere in the vast expanses of Russia, and a handful of ji-88s that remained at the disposal of General Keller could not replace the battlefield aviation in any way. To quote General Halder's diary again:

207

"The troops of Army Group North almost on the entire front (with the exception of the 291st Infantry Division standing in front of Libau) repelled enemy tank attacks, which, presumably, were led by the Russian 3rd Tank Corps with the support of several motorized brigades. The right wing of the army group was forced to retreat to the Neman. On this sector of the front, the Russians are fighting extremely stubbornly and fiercely.

In general, it has now become clear that we will have to completely forget about the offensive, but, on the contrary, throw everything that we have at our disposal towards the Russian troops that have penetrated. At the same time, the High Command of the Luftwaffe, apparently, does not participate at all in directing the operations of its units, Goering lost his head. It's hard to understand. The complete absence of large operational reserves completely deprives us of the opportunity to effectively influence the course of hostilities."

As a result of Sobennikov's efforts, under the command of Major General Shestopalov (commander of the 12th mechanized corps), a real Tatar horde, made up of separate regiments and even battalions, gathered. The most important thing, according to Sobennikov, was that he managed to scrape together 20 KV-1, 7 KV-2 and 20 T-34 tanks, which were supposed to play the role of a battering ram that breaks through the German defenses. The ram was followed by 280 tanks assembled according to the principle of "each creature in pairs". It was hard to imagine that such, so to speak, "connection" could achieve anything. Subsequent events confirmed this. The only bright spot in this whole gloomy situation was the promised air support. Major General Ionov firmly promised to bomb Tilsit in the Neman.

Ionov tried to fulfill his promise, the morning raid on Tilsit turned out to be the most powerful of all that the Germans had to endure so far. Of course, the blows of the Soviet
planes were missing

208

the strength that the German dive-bombers demonstrated, but they took it in quantity. Kuznetsov managed to negotiate with the command of the Baltic Fleet and received 3 more regiments of bombers. Of course, it was not the job of mine and torpedo aviation to bomb anti-tank batteries, but no one really counted on them, naval pilots had to create a massive scene, the front-line aviation dealt the main blow.

After a short artillery preparation (there was simply not enough ammunition for a long one), the tanks rushed to the bridges. It turned out that the German defense was not as strong as it seemed at first glance, besides, the soldiers were shocked by the terrible bombardment, since they simply did not have time to dig normal trenches and dugouts. This allowed part of the tanks to slip through the railway bridge, but at the exit from it they were stopped by the fire of the surviving German guns. General Reinhardt, foreseeing such an attempt, ordered to place 88-mm anti-aircraft guns among the buildings and gardens. Some of them were destroyed, but the rest did their job. Heavy projectiles, fired almost at point-blank range, pierced the KV's thick armor like cardboard. This was followed by an explosion of ammunition, and the tower, somersaulting, flew into the air. In a matter of minutes, at the exit from the bridge, almost the entire tank ram was destroyed, the surviving vehicles hurriedly retreated back. An attempt by the Soviet infantry to break through the bridge was stopped by the machine gunners of the Totenkopf division. Stunned and shocked, they still remained in position. But, most likely, the sight of dozens of burnt tanks played a role.

The trouble came from where it was not expected. Reinhardt could not organize an equally strong defense along the entire front line of his corps, he correctly guessed the direction of the main Russian attack and repelled it, but ... Quite unexpectedly, the 54th Panzer Division, although greatly weakened by the actions of Sobennikov, managed to capture the bridge at Ragnit and crossed the Neman. Both the Soviet and the German command considered this direction to be secondary, and therefore did not pay attention to it.

209

due attention. The units of the German 269th Infantry Division located there hastily retreated.

Sobennikov, having learned about this, immediately ordered Shestopalov's consolidated tank group to be transferred there and hit on Tilsit. The 236th motorized division of the 28th mechanized corps was ordered to gain a foothold on the bridgehead, which was done. But, in a strange way, this success

played a fatal role in the fate of the 12th, 3rd and 28th mechanized corps. Hasty movement into the zone of the 8th Army, unprepared attacks, new hasty redeployment led to the fact that no more than 100 tanks reached the bridgehead, which was completely insufficient to develop success.

General Shestopalov personally led the remnants of his group in an attack to the north, but he was met by the 36th mechanized division hastily deployed towards Ragnit. General Ottenbacher managed to redeploy the 87th Infantry Regiment, reinforcing it with two artillery battalions and the 36th tank destroyer battalion, but his infantry had to face an extremely uncomfortable and dangerous encounter with tanks. If only the Russians were able to reinforce Shestopalov's group with infantry and artillery, the breakthrough could well have been successful, however, as we have already said, the 236th motorized division at that time was engaged in equipping a bridgehead, and Soviet artillery never had German mobility, but tanks still remained a formidable force. On the left flank, they broke through to the positions of the P / 3Z6th artillery battalion and destroyed one of the batteries, but at the same time a tank of General Shestopalov was blown up by a direct hit from a 105-mm projectile. It was only later that the Russians were able to stop the tank destroyers.

As a result, both groups were defeated and retreated. Ottenbacher led the remnants of the regiment to Tilsit, and the surviving Russian tanks rolled back to the bridgehead at Ragnit. General Sobennikov was forced to report to the front headquarters that his army had finally lost the ability to conduct offensive operations,

210

having lost 2000 tanks. However, he claimed that as a result of the fighting, he completely defeated the tank group of General Göpner and the SS tank corps attached to it. He estimated German losses at 5,000 tanks.

As a result, an unsteady balance was established in the northern sector of the Eastern Front. Indeed, Russian. The 11th Army had completely exhausted its offensive potential by the evening of the fourth day of the operation, and Lieutenant General Sobennikov decided not to report that the actual combat losses amounted to no more than 40 percent of the tanks, the rest of the vehicles stood on the sides of the road. roads are monuments to the quality of production and the qualifications of driver mechanics. In addition, despite all efforts, the Soviet rear turned out to be completely unprepared for modern mobile warfare. Supply columns and mobile repair shops could not keep up with the tank units, and as a result, three mechanized corps turned into infantry. Now even the organization of reliable defense on the Ragnitsky bridgehead seemed extremely difficult.

However, the position of the Germans was no better. The formidable Panzerwaffe failed to prove their superiority over the Russian tank forces. The reason for this was a lot of mutually intertwined factors, but the main ones are immediately visible. Taken by surprise, the Germans immediately lost one of their main trump cards - air support. By the end of the second day of the war, the Luftwaffe was forced to switch to the struggle for survival, forgetting about interaction with the army. The German tank divisions were forced to engage in oncoming tank battles, having lost their second trump card - excellently coordinated interaction with artillery and anti-tank units. As a result, the Panzerwaffe were also bled.

The first week of the war on the Eastern Front led to a forced lull, the Soviet troops advanced deep into German territory at a distance of up to 100

211

kilometers and stopped. The Germans did not have the strength to push them back and were even forced to withdraw troops where they had had initial success, like the 2nd Panzer Group. Its flanks hung in the air, and further advance seemed completely pointless.

A paradoxical situation was emerging - the infantry war of the 1914 model was returning, with the only difference that now the Russians had a fairly strong aircraft. There is no doubt that if it included some analogues of German dive-bombers, the actions of the Soviet troops even now could be successful. But the horizontal bombers could not deliver accurate enough strikes and their support for infantry advances was ineffective, and so far infantry attacks have brought only monstrous losses without a hint of success. German attacks ended in exactly the same way, which was not surprising, because the German infantry had no air support at all. As a result, both armies began hastily digging in on the northern and central sectors of the Eastern Front. Oddly enough, the rear had to decide the outcome of the struggle - who would be able to restore the combat capability of the battered mobile troops and aviation first.

And everything would still be tolerable for Germany, if not for the situation in the south. The Romanian army was unable to even pretend to resist, the Russians quickly advanced towards the oil fields of Ploiesti. Only the German 11th Army somehow held back their advance, fighting virtually in complete isolation. It was not difficult to predict what would happen after Germany lost Romanian oil.

Dmitry Khmel'nitsky

HISTORY IN THE SUBJUNCTIVE

Rasivye literary and historical reminiscences

tions with a literal understanding and attempts to practice

tic use is most often nonsense.

The people do not necessarily deserve the government they have; the truth is not in the middle, but anywhere; history has the subjunctive, and so on.

Most often, supporters of the traditional Soviet version of the history of World War II disagree with the last statement—and publicly declare it. This version ordered to perceive what happened to the USSR as the only possible variant of events and not to puzzle over why they happened and how this could have been avoided.

We have been brought up with historical determinism. In the mind of a Soviet person, life flowed from one inevitability to another: the victory of the revolution was inevitable, the victory of Stalin was also inevitable, collectivization, industrialization and the Gulag were inevitable. War with Germany was as inevitable as victory in it.

One of the main prejudices characteristic of the Soviet worldview is the belief in the historical and moral inevitability of the anti-Hitler coalition with the USSR. As if the allies were thrown into the arms of Stalin not by tragic circumstances, but by the natural preference of communism over Nazism.

The reason for this phenomenon is probably that for seventy years Soviet society did not have the slightest influence on events. And neither on real events, nor on the interpretation of the events of the past. From here

213

and the popular maxim already mentioned above – “history has no subjunctive mood”. History, of course, is realized in only one version, but it could look different.

History as a science exists only in the subjunctive mood. It explores the causes and patterns of events that have occurred, and automatically answers the question of why certain

events happened, others did not, and under what circumstances the historical process could look different. The study of history is the enumeration of possible options.

Only by asking yourself the question: "What would have happened if the circumstances had turned out differently?" you can understand the meaning of what is happening. Especially when it comes to such an intricate and multidimensional situation as that which developed in Europe after the First World War.

For example, supporters of one-dimensional history confine themselves to stating the fact that on June 22, 1941, Germany attacked the USSR. From this, the on-duty conclusion is drawn that Germany is the aggressor, and the USSR is the victim.

The conclusion is foolish, because there are several possible answers. A victim of the USSR or an aggressor, even if it did not take place at that moment - this is determined primarily by their own Soviet intentions and preparations. Which are quite easy to calculate, if we discard the unscrupulous maxim about "history without the subjunctive mood" and hide our brains.

One of the first to do this was Viktor Suvorov in the late 1970s—astonishingly late, given that the war ended in 1945.

He proved that the catastrophic situation of the 1930s was created not by some "historical objectivity", but by the evil will of specific people with a criminal psyche. Moreover, the very course of events depended heavily on trifles and accidents. If Hitler had not guessed Stalin's plans in 1940, and if Stalin had not made a mistake in calculating the timing of the attack in 1941, the fate of Europe could have turned out differently. With this approach, the analysis of the historical process is a fascinating class.

214

Of course, it is impossible to calculate all the nuances. Let us single out only the main factors that determined the events of the 1930s—constant and variable.

The character and strategic goals of the three main opposing sides—the USSR, Germany, and Western democracies—can be considered a stable factor. The aims of Hitler and Stalin were the same: to expand their empires as far as possible. Although Stalin's intentions went much further than Hitler's intentions. Hitler's maximum program in 1939, before the conclusion of the pact with Stalin, did not go beyond the unification of the lands inhabited by Germans through blackmail by military force. Hitler did not plan to start a world war.

Stalin's maximum program assumed precisely a world war in Europe with the involvement of the maximum number of countries in it. A war in which the USSR will intervene at a convenient moment in order to remain the only winner.

The unchanging goal of the West is to offer passive or active resistance to both aggressors, trying not to provoke a world war.

Variable factors:

- the success of the revolutions in Russia and Germany, which depended on many more or less random causes;
- the success of the implementation of the strategic plans of both dictatorial regimes - that is, who would be more successful in deceiving opponents and attacking first;
- success in creating the atomic bomb - that is, which of the three main participants in the events would have managed to make it before the others.

Let's try, taking into account these factors, to calculate the main options for the development of events.

Option 1 The October Revolution failed. Reasons - quite real - could be a lot of:

215

1. Kornilov's rebellion is a success.
2. The Provisional Government promptly (in July-October) arrests Lenin and his comrades and disarms the Red Guard.
3. The Left SRs win in July 1918 and are forced to return to the Constituent Assembly.
4. The Red Army loses the Civil War (as later happened to the communists and anarchists in Spain).

Russia, to one degree or another, remains democratic. In this case, Hitler, even having won the elections, is dealing with a united democratic Europe and more than likely does not decide on the Second World War. In peacetime, the Nazis would not have gone to the genocide of "inferior races." A relatively liberal Nazi regime (liberal in relation to the Soviet regime, that is, without mass terror, as it was in Germany before the war) would have existed in isolation for several decades and would gradually democratize back. Moreover, Hitler almost did not socialize the economy. Totalitarian regimes are languishing without extreme conditions—civil or external wars, terror, pressure from outside, and armed consolidation of society as a response to this pressure. If the Nazis had not also come to power, Europe would have been guaranteed a golden age.

Option 2

Stalin is in power, but Hitler is not. Germany remains democratic. Stalin fails to push Germany against England, Poland and France. He is dealing with a united, undivided Europe and is forced to look for another way to start a war. Perhaps he follows the path of Hitler, blackmailing pieces from neighboring countries until he hits a wall and, most likely, does not decide on a world war. Most likely, he could not even count on pieces, as this was the case in the 1920s.

216

Unless, of course, he manages to be the first to make an atomic bomb. But this is another, completely catastrophic option.

Option 3

Quite real. Both Stalin and Hitler come to power. But Western countries (first of all, the USA) were cautious enough to refuse the USSR the purchase of military technology in the late 1920s and early 30s. Stalin fails to build in a matter of years an automobile, tractor, tank and aviation industry and a combat-ready — at the European level — army. Having no chance of final victory in the world war, he does not dare to provoke it by proposing to Hitler to conclude a pact on the division of spheres of influence and a joint attack on Poland. And for Hitler, the USSR with a primitive, non-motorized army is not of interest as a military ally (this option was analyzed back in Mein Kampf). Perhaps Hitler would have succeeded in some conquests in Europe, but things would not have come to a world war.

A local consequence of such a development of events would be the physical impossibility of forced industrialization in the USSR. There would simply be nothing to build. Consequently, collectivization, which served as a source of funds (financial and material) for

industrialization would probably be much less bloody. And industrialization itself would not be worth such sacrifices. Less terrible would be, most likely, all the waves of terror in the USSR.

Option 4

Completely historical version, that is, what happened in reality.

Hitler got ahead of Stalin and in the summer of 1941 defeated the Red Army prepared for the attack. Stalin is forced to turn to Western countries for help. Together the allies win

217

Germany. Instead of all of Europe, Stalin gets only its eastern part. By the end of the war, Stalin has a chance to return to the original pre-war plan and try, after the victory over Germany, to continue the offensive against the West - to turn, as it was originally supposed, a world war into a "world revolution". The balance of military forces in Europe in 1945 was such that it is unlikely that anything other than an atomic bomb could have stopped Stalin and Zhukov.

The atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki not only killed hundreds of thousands of Japanese, but also forced Japan to immediately capitulate, which saved the lives of millions of Americans and Japanese: the storming of the Japanese islands would have cost, according to American estimates, about a million soldiers only to the United States - so great was the readiness of Japan defend.

In addition, and perhaps most importantly, Stalin was shown what would happen to Moscow if he decided to continue the war. In fact, Hiroshima saved Europe. The cold war never turned into a hot one. The Soviet Union was late with the development of atomic weapons by three or four years and, as it turned out, forever. Since then, no matter how strained Soviet science and Soviet industry, neither Stalin, nor Khrushchev, nor Brezhnev succeeded in narrowing the gap in the level of nuclear weapons. Which was the only real guarantee of peace until 1989.

Option 5

The Americans are several years late in obtaining atomic weapons. Stalin takes the war to the west in 1945, throws the Americans into the sea and captures Europe. A few more years or months later, the Americans still get the bomb and immediately use it. Europe, most likely, could have been liberated, but it would be hard to imagine at what cost and what would be the consequences.

218

Option 6

Stalin manages to get atomic weapons before the Americans - not in 1949, but in 1943-1945. He immediately and with great joy turns the war into an atomic one with the same goal - the immediate capture of all Europe and Asia. He no longer needs allies and, having destroyed Berlin, continues his aggression towards the West. The Americans make the bomb a little belatedly, in 1945-1946, and also use it immediately. In the mid-1940s, a world nuclear war begins with an unclear result and hundreds of millions of victims.

Option 7

In the science fiction novel "Reserve for Academicians", Kir Bulychev developed, at first glance, an unexpected, but nevertheless quite real option. A particularly perspicacious scientist convinces the chiefs of the NKVD to create an atomic sharashka in the early 1930s. The first atomic bomb was tested in the USSR in 1938. True, Kir Bulychev went further along a literary spectacular path, which led to an almost "happy ending". Ill with radiation sickness

Stalin decides before his death to take revenge on Poland for the defeat in 1920 and in 1939 he drops the first and only atomic bomb on Warsaw captured by the Germans at the very moment when Hitler, who had secretly arrived there, is taking a military parade. The death of both dictators paralyzes the world war, it ends as soon as it begins.

It is, of course, pure literature. Reality could be much scarier. Stalin, who got his hands on the bomb in the late 1930s, would no longer depend for his actions on a real or imaginary alliance with Germany. World War II would have started at the same time, in the late 1930s, but immediately nuclear and, God forbid, victorious for the USSR.

219

Option 8

This is the most interesting option, and its study, most likely, will become in the very near future the main subject of research by historians of the Second World War. This is the option actually planned by Stalin and destined for implementation by him.

Until the spring of 1941, everything went on as it did in reality. In 1939, Stalin and Hitler jointly start a war, each seizes what is stipulated by secret agreements. In the summer of 1940, Hitler realizes the danger of a stab in the back and begins to prepare an attack on the USSR, without waiting for the final victory over England, but does not have time. Stalin and Zhukov in July 1941 are implementing their plan of attack on Germany.

The German army, standing in a vulnerable position on the eastern border, is surrounded and perishes as the Red Army did in reality. The difference is that Hitler did not have a second echelon that could meet the enemy in the depths of his own territory, and there are no such reserves of territory, such human and raw material resources as Stalin had. Most likely, he would not even have had time reserves to negotiate with England and America on the joint resistance of the USSR. Stalin has excellent chances in a short time to capture all or almost all of Europe, already defeated by Hitler. And not only Europe.

Having broken out into the European expanse and the European autobahns, the Red Army takes Berlin and moves on. France no longer has its own army, and the communist movement is strong. There is someone to rely on and there is someone to create local authorities from. In Germany, the picture is the same, especially since there are millions of recent communists and communist sympathizers. The situation that led to the creation of the GDR after the war is played out much earlier, but already throughout Germany. Simultaneously with the attack on Germany, Finland is occupied - the echo of these plans can be seen in the senseless bombardment of Finland on June 25, 1941.

220

Bulgaria, Türkiye and Iran are also among the top priorities.

Then, perhaps after a short respite, it is the turn of Southern Europe. In Spain, communist sentiment is strong - to finish what was not achieved during the civil war does not seem to be an unsolvable task. And so on.

In the occupied countries, economic and political reforms begin, as happened in reality in the Baltic states and Eastern Poland in 1939-1940. There is resistance, suppressed by the usual methods - mass terror. On a European scale, this means tens of millions of victims.

The position of England remains the same, as before, she is isolated from the mainland, only now Stalin is in charge of it. America, which is unable to provide serious assistance to Europe on the mainland, fights at sea until it receives an atomic bomb and drops it, but not on Hiroshima, but most likely on Tula or Chelyabinsk.

The war of liberation resumes in Europe, but with an incalculable number of victims.

If Stalin also manages to obtain an atomic bomb, then the war becomes nuclear on both sides.

In the light of this perspective, the realized version of the Second World War with 50 million victims seems relatively harmless. It is safe to say that Hitler's desperate attack on the USSR in 1941 saved Europe (including the USSR) from a much worse fate.

well well

As is well known, the archives of the Soviet General Staff are tightly closed, and very little is documented about Soviet military planning before 1941. I think that the reason is not only not so much that there

221

you can find documents that unequivocally confirm the plans for the USSR to attack Germany. Evidence of the existence of these plans and so in abundance. These are separate documents that accidentally flew out of the archive, and - most importantly! - the very military preparations of the USSR in 1940-1941, which are well studied and which cannot be interpreted in a defensive sense. And there are no self-respecting historians who want to do this for a long time.

But the attack on Germany in itself made sense only as a first step towards the conquest of Europe (and in general everything that Stalin could reach).

The defeat of Germany, like the defeat of the USSR by the Germans, was supposed to be in the form of a blitzkrieg, hardly more than one or two months were allotted for it. Plans for the further development of events were certainly considered and drawn up by Stalin and Zhukov in the first months of 1941. It is these plans that will become a real sensation when the archives of the General Staff are ever opened - and if they are not destroyed in a timely manner.

But even in the worst case, in the event of the liquidation of archival documents, there can be no doubt about the nature of these plans and the approximate sequence of actions. How not them even today.

It is unlikely that these plans in terms of goals and means (except for the appearance of atomic weapons) are very different from the plans of the Warsaw Pact to seize Europe, which are well known to the NATO countries. -

In principle, the military plans of the Warsaw Pact in the 1960s-1980s. — this is just the development and refinement of the plans of the Stalin era, both pre-war and post-war.

well well

You can go further into this exciting activity - the options will multiply and branch. A world war could have taken on a completely different character if the Nazis had received the atomic bomb before anyone else (during

222

during the war they were closer to this than the Soviet specialists). One can go a little deeper and imagine what the USSR would have looked like if, after the death of Lenin, the country had been headed not by the cynic Stalin, but by the idealistic fanatic Trotsky, who dreamed of an immediate world revolution. Or the humanist Bukharin, who certainly would have preserved the NEP (he is a humanist, of course, only against the background of other cannibals). In both cases, a completely different regime would have arisen in the USSR.

The eight listed options are, as it were, the most obvious cases. At the same time, it cannot be said that the fourth – realized – variant is less fantastic than the others. In many ways, the opposite is true. Who could, for example, have predicted in advance that the cautious and far-sighted, strategically thinking Stalin would make such a fatal mistake in his calculations and allow Hitler to attack first? And this, as it turned out, is the only alignment of events in which the West could, in the end, be the winner. To what miracle should we be grateful that the atomic bomb was at the disposal of America in the summer of 1945, and not a few months later, when Stalin could stand at the English Channel? It should be recognized that

Humanity has gotten off lightly.

well

Engaging in historical fantasizing is by no means an empty undertaking. Today, sixty-five years after the end of the war, the problem lies not in the lack of historical data, but in their understanding. Absolutely false historical stereotypes worked out in the fresh wake of the Soviet victory are very tenacious. One of the main ones is the general confidence in the historical and moral inevitability of the anti-Hitler coalition led by the USSR. Which is not true at all.

For the Western allies of the USSR, the Nazis and the Communists were equally disgusting. But at different times they are dangerous in different ways. In the conflict between them, support

223

it made sense to live not the prettiest (there was simply no such choice), but the weakest. The half-broken Soviet Union, which had won with the help of its allies, was much less dangerous for humanity than the Third Reich, which had dealt with Stalin alone. And vice versa.

If Stalin had succeeded in realizing his plans and attacking Germany in 1941, the West would have been forced to support Hitler in one form or another. Manual, half-broken Hitler is not very dangerous for civilization. And it is impossible to imagine anything worse than the Soviet Union on the scale of the whole of Europe.

Hitler, having attacked the USSR, declared himself the defender of mankind against communism. The injured Stalin turned to the West for help in the fight against world fascism. But they both lied.

Andrey Burovsky DAY "H"

He passed the planet Clovis, three hundred and eighty inhabitants of which were quite seriously preparing for the conquest of the universe.

K. Simak

Xenth got drunk drunk and promised to drink the sea. The next morning, having sobered up, he was horrified by his promise.

From Aesop's fables

THE IDEA OF CONQUERING THE WORLD

There is nothing new in the fact that communism in the USSR is a utopia in power. There is nothing new in the fact that this utopia wanted to become Zemsharna.

There is nothing new in the fact that Stalin was a genius of incredulity, secrecy, cunning, the ability to calculate several moves ahead. No one knows what form this idea could have taken in Stalin's head.

It is also nothing new that the communists were building an empire by assembling the countries of the former Russian Empire first. To do this, they were ready at any moment to violate any international treaties. The communists easily violated the agreement with Georgia and occupied this country in 1921. They suppressed the 1924 uprising with incredible cruelty. They re-conquered Kazakhstan, the Caucasus and Central Asia. Only a lack of forces prevented them from conquering Poland, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Moldova.

8 A. Isaev 225

Already after 1920, and after the formation of the USSR in 1922, the Communists waged a Civil War:

- 1) With white armies.
- 2) With the "green" peasant armies.
- 3) With political enemies, socialist parties and their armed forces.
- 4) With nation-states and their armies on the outskirts of the former Russian Empire.

But that's not all! The Bolsheviks consistently believed that Russia was a "wrong" country. It is necessary to radically remake not only its entire political, but also its entire economic and social system. The entire people of Russia, all its estates, classes, ethnographic and cultural groups were subject to a complete "remake". As they said then, you need to "change your skin".

Here it is, another "front" of the Civil War:

- 5) The war with the people of Russia for its sovietization.

The Bolsheviks thought the same about ALL the peoples of the world. They believed that the legitimate governments of all powers were not legitimate. They are formed by the bourgeoisie, not by the proletariat. These governments must be overthrown in order for the proletariat to take power.

By virtue of this position, the Bolsheviks found themselves in a state of war with the rest of mankind. They could not yet, but they really wanted to open this "sixth front" of the Civil War:

- 6) War with the legitimate governments of the whole world.

And behind this sixth direction of the Civil War, a seventh was visible ...

- 7) War with the peoples of the world for their sovietization.

All this is part of not a national, but a World Civil War. What happens in the country easily spills out beyond its borders. What is happening in the world is reflected in the policy of the Bolsheviks.

The idea of world domination appeared before the USSR. An old friend of Lenin, G. A. Solomon, recalled at the very beginning of 1918: "My next meeting was with Lenin ... A conversation with Lenin made me

226

most depressing experience. It was pure maximalist nonsense. "Tell me, Vladimir Ilyich, as an old comrade," I said, "what is going on here?" Is this really a bet on socialism, on the island of Utopia, only on a colossal scale? I do not understand anything...

"There is no island of Utopia here," he answered sharply in a very authoritative tone. "It is a matter of creating a socialist state... From now on, Russia will be the first state with a socialist system implemented in it... Ah!.. you shrug your shoulders! Well, then, be even more surprised! It's not about Russia, good gentlemen, I don't give a damn about it - this is only the stage through which we are passing to the world revolution | ..!

On July 10, 1918, at the All-Russian Congress of Soviets, Soviet Russia adopted the Constitution. It consisted of six sections, and the second section, "General Provisions", declared the temporary, transitional nature of the Constitution. Even the third section, "The Construction of Soviet Power", included formulations of a purely political nature, oriented not to Russia, but to the entire world community. "Setting as our main task the destruction of all exploitation of man by man, the complete elimination of the division of society into classes, the merciless suppression of the exploiters, the establishment of a socialist orientation of the society and the victory of socialism in all countries..."

In the fifth section, "Budgetary law" is also a continuous policy, and an international one at that.

The constitution determined the ways of destroying all the old economic foundations of the state and the financial impact on other states. The main principles are the refusal to pay debts "as the first blow to international banking and financial capital" and the promise to follow this path "until complete victory

1 Solomon G. A. Among the red leaders. Paris. 1930. T. 1. S. 15. 227

international workers' uprising against the yoke of capital".

In 1922 the USSR is created. The Constitution of the Soviet Union begins with the Declaration on the Formation of the USSR. After a long demagoguery about the fact that "There, in the camp of capitalism, national enmity and inequality, colonial slavery and chauvinism, national oppression and pogroms, imperialist atrocities and wars. Here, in the camp of socialism, mutual trust and peace, national freedom and equality, peaceful coexistence and fraternal co-operation of peoples", the "Declaration" finally gets down to business: "access to the Union is open to all socialist Soviet republics, both existing and and having to arise in the future, the new union state will be a worthy crowning of the foundations laid back in October 1917 of peaceful coexistence and fraternal cooperation of peoples, it will serve as a faithful bulwark against world capitalism and a new decisive step towards the unification of the working people of all countries to the World Socialist Soviet Republic".

Many other equally impressive texts could be cited.

The USSR is the form that the communist fixation idea took: world domination. A very convenient form: at least theoretically, any republics could be attached to the USSR without changing either the political structure or the structure of the state.

ORIGINAL LOCALITY OF THE IDEA

The communists were not the first to come up with the idea of conquering the world. Alexander the Great wanted to conquer the world - and instantly became convinced that the part of Oikume known to him

1! Basic Law (Constitution) of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Adopted by the second session of the Central Executive Committee of the USSR of the first convocation on July 6, 1923 and in the final version by the II Congress of Soviets of the USSR on January 31, 1924. M., 1924.

228

we are much smaller than the unknown. He wanted to conquer India, but he could only stand on its very edge. And behind India, as it "turned out", lie colossal regions, about which neither Alexander nor his great teacher, Aristotle, simply knows anything.

Moreover, the areas of the globe that Alexander learned about by the end of his life are only a tiny piece of the entire Earth.

Genghis Khan commanded his descendants to conquer the Universe, to reach the "last sea". He had vaguely heard about the Atlantic Ocean, and he became this "last" for the savage and ignoramus. In reality, everything ended not even on the shores of the Atlantic... The "Last Sea" was the Adriatic, and that is how it all ended. The oceans either roared in storms, or spread out in blinding blue silk. They washed Cape Horn, the islands of Tasmania and Tahiti, the coast of California and Greenland. The oceans rose in tsunamis and carried ships. Volcanoes erupted in the oceans and delicious fish swam.

..And in the wild and impoverished steppes, on the threshold of a primitive yurt, sat an illiterate, bow-legged savage, who not only could not conquer all this... Who did not even know that all this existed in the world. And if I saw it, I didn't understand what it was that I saw.

And the Communists were not the first to conquer the world with the power of ideas.

The emperor of the Roman Empire, Constantine, was depicted with an orb in his hand. The orb symbolized the globe, into which a cross was stuck, a symbol of the Christianization of the World. The empire considered itself a ship of true faith, sailing in the ocean of paganism. But the plans to take over and Christianize the world were not destined not only to come true, they could not even come close to being realized.

All "great" conquerors inevitably face the fact that the world is much larger and more diverse than it seems to them from an ideological hangover.

Choking with enthusiasm for the "Zemsharnaya

229

republics of the soviets, striving to "give the land of Grenada to the peasants", dreaming of dying in battles on the Ganges, so that their Arbat homeland would shine from Japan to England, the boys in red revolutionary trousers did not take this into account at all.

Let's not talk seriously about the Zemshar Republic of Soviets: let's not get on the same footing with Pasha Kogan and other equally frivolous people.

There is something deeply local in the very setting of such tasks.

Let's not even take the whole World, let's take only Europe - a small piece of our colossal world. Even this piece is too large and varied for anyone to conquer. Not only Stalin, but anyone in general.

THE IDEA OF CONQUERING EUROPE

In propaganda films like "Sniper" or in the book "First Strike"! The war of the future was understood simply: the defeat of the Wehrmacht, with further comprehension by the enemy soldiers of all the genius of Marx's ideas.

The film "If Tomorrow is War" was filmed using documentary footage of the maneuvers taking place then. Documentary footage turns into feature footage: the enemy attacks, is instantly defeated, the war is on enemy territory, the Red Army is bombing Germany: Nuremberg, Magdeburg, Furth. And in Germany, of course, uprisings of the proletariat against the "fascists" break out.

Even imagine for a moment - it would be so in reality, and not in the inflamed imagination of directors and stage directors.

But what is the "Earthness" in this?

Even if we defeat the Wehrmacht and occupy Germany, France and Belgium, Switzerland and Italy, the countries of the Balkans and Scandinavia lie behind it. Every country

!! panov N.N. First hit. A story about a future war. M., 1939. 230

will have to conquer, putting a lot of their soldiers. An occupying army will have to be introduced into each of them, suppressing the uprisings and carrying out sovietization. Where to get the strength for all this?

In reality, the USSR with difficulty and not completely sovietized only Eastern Europe, and even in it had "punctures" such as Yugoslavia, Albania, and stubborn Polish resistance.

By the way, did the communists Sovietize Russia? They sincerely believed that the personality of a person is a complete nothing, a product of the environment, and nothing more. And if so, if you educate a person in the right environment, then you will get a like-minded communist. But many people whom they brought up as pioneers and members of the Komsomol grew up either completely indifferent to ideology or staunch enemies of the Soviet regime.

It is in Russia. How were they going to Sovietize Spain and Ireland? Not to mention the Indians in Peru and the farmers in Australia?

As for conquests... They were constantly hindered from conquering the world by exactly what the communists either "didn't believe" or didn't care about: the inner world, the inner convictions of a person. The Finns lay down behind a boulder and fired to the last, at the cost of their own lives, putting bullet after bullet into the "builders of a brighter future". And therefore, even after dividing the world with Hitler, Stalin could not conquer Finland allotted to him. After the war, the USSR was forced to leave Austria, to refuse to send troops to Greece ...

If the USSR in 1941 had begun to implement plans to seize Europe, it would not have been able to carry them out purely physically.

The very attempt of this kind was absolute madness in the most direct, literal sense - a manifestation of inadequacy. Such an attempt could only be made by people spiritually living outside the real world.

231

WHY WOULD THE COMMUNISTS NEED A WAR?

The Hoover Institution of Stanford University in California (USA) keeps a package of 232 top-secret decisions of the Soviet Politburo on foreign policy issues for 1934-1936. "German agents regularly acquired such documents, receiving them 7-8 days after their creation"! These resolutions contained information about the instructions of the Litburo to the top of the People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs and the highest government officials.

On February 11, 1934, the Politburo decided that a major European war would help the proletariat seize power in the major European centers.

In the resolution of the Politburo | | May 1935, the Politburo believed that the USSR would take part in new conflicts in Europe and Asia exactly to the extent "which would allow it to be a decisive factor in the sense of turning the world war into a world revolution"?.

On August 19, 1939, Stalin told the Politburo that if the Pact was signed with the Third Reich, then the Reich would certainly attack Poland. And then the entry into the war of England and France will become inevitable. The Soviet Union, on the other hand, can stay out of the conflict and wait in an advantageous position until its turn comes.

Back in 1920, during the Soviet-Polish war, the task was set: "To reach Germany, carrying the corpse of white Poland on Red Army bayonets." Now, since 1939, and Poland is gone, Brest stands on the Soviet-German border.

The "icebreaker of the revolution" cut into the body of the rest of Europe and in 1940 conquered almost all of it.

Apparently, Stalin was in no hurry. He

! McDowell J., Lowenthal M. Stalin's Foreign Policy Documents Shedding Light on the Stalin-Hitler Pact // Truth of Viktor Suvorov. New evidence. M., 2008. S. 235.

2 Ibid. S. 243. 232

he gave time, but not at all out of cowardice or weakness. After all, he saw that time was working for the USSR. The later the USSR enters the war, the more the states of Europe will be exhausted fighting each other. And the Red Army every year will become more professional, stronger, more active, more manageable.

If it is possible to hit Hitler in August 1941, that is better than in July. And if possible in the spring of 1942 - even better! If Hitler was ahead of Stalin, it was precisely because Stalin was in no hurry. Time worked for him.

And behind all the borders, the Red Army is impatiently waiting for like-minded people, waiting only for the moment - how could they blow up the world in which they live?

OFFENSIVE WAR PROPAGANDA

The anecdotal nature of talk about the "peacefulness of the USSR" is very clearly visible if you read articles in the Soviet press in 1938-1939. Literally tired of the flow of evil, not shy in the expressions of aggression. "Fascist freaks", "cannibals", "stupid people", "the so-called "generals" are still compliments. Caricatures depicting enemy soldiers and politicians with pig snouts and monkey muzzles are in Krasnaya Zvezda and Literaturnaya Gazette.

What is characteristic: in 1938 the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks was already talking about "the outbreak of a world war." About the "Second World War", which will lead to uprisings and revolutions in Europe... Formally, the Second World War is counted from September 1, 1939, but for the communists it has already begun. Which is logical: the civil war in Spain is already underway, Czechoslovakia is already being divided.

Even more characteristic is the clear anti-German orientation of all militaristic propaganda.

There is no common border with the Third Reich yet. War with the German people still does not smell. And the enemy soldiers in the films "If there is war tomorrow" and "Escad

233

rilla number 5" speak German! And it was in 1938 that Eisenstein was filming Alexander Nevsky!

Here is a song from this movie "If there is war tomorrow". Words by V. Lebedev-Kumach, music by Dm. and Dan. Pokrassov.

If tomorrow there is war, if the enemy attacks, If the dark force comes, -

As one man, the entire Soviet people will stand up for a free homeland.

Chorus:

On earth, in heaven and at sea Our melody is both mighty and harsh: If tomorrow there is war,

If the hike is tomorrow, -

Get ready to go today!

If there is war tomorrow, the country will be stirred up From Kronstadt to Vladivostok. The country will shake, great and strong,

And we will crush the enemy cruelly.

Chorus.

An airplane will fly, a machine gun will rattle, mighty tanks will rumble,

And the battleships will go, and the infantry will go, And dashing carts will rush.

Chorus.

We do not want war, but we will defend ourselves, - We strengthen the defense not in vain, -

And on the enemy's land, we will defeat the enemy With little blood, with a mighty blow!

Chorus.

In the whole world nowhere is there such a force, To crush our country, -

Stalin is with us dear, and with an iron hand Voroshilov leads us to victory!

Chorus.

Get up people, get ready for a hike! Drums, drum harder!

234

Musicians, go! Singers, go ahead! Resound our victory song!

Chorus:

On earth, in heaven and at sea Our melody is both powerful and harsh: If tomorrow there is war,

If the hike is tomorrow, -

Get ready to go today!

Abram Room's film Squadron No. 5 begins with Soviet intelligence intercepting an order from the Third Reich command to cross the Soviet border. Thousands of Soviet aircraft take off to bombard German airfields, including No. 5 Squadron. "Ours" are destroying "theirs" with terrible force, but the "fascists" knock out two of our planes. Pilots of Squadron No. 5 - Major Grishin and Captain Nesterov - descend on enemy territory by parachute. A! Here they are, underground hangars of enemies!!! Having captured the radio, the heroes call in squadrons of Soviet bombers. "We" "them" will show - to build underground hangars! And here is the German anti-fascist. Your boyfriend, a proletarian, a working bone. With its help, the characters of the film capture "theirs" plane and fly away to their own.

And the same thing happens in literature! At the end of the 1930s, Soviet literature was not just whipping up war hysteria (it had been doing this since 1918). She names a very specific future enemy: "fascist" Germany. Socialist Reich.

Not a single book before the war had such circulation as The First Strike!. After the signing of the Pact in 1939, the book was withdrawn from sale ... But for some time only the lazy did not read it. AND

in general, every red commander was obliged to read this book, because the military publishing house published it in the educational series "Commander's Library". |

Everything is "as it should be" in it: the enemy, "fascists", attacks. But

ÿ See: Shpanov N.N. First hit. A story about a future war. M., 1939.

235

"ours", of course, instantly overturn the enemy, on the territory of the USSR the battle goes on only for the first day. And then the sky darkens from avenging planes... "The percentage of destruction was quite satisfactory, despite the good work of the enemy's air defense. Over fifty percent of his brand new two-gun fighters were destroyed on the ground before they could take to the air.

"The flight personnel of the enemy units that were attacked showed stubbornness. The officers rushed to the vehicles, despite the explosions of bombs and the machine-gun fire of attack aircraft. They pulled planes out of burning hangars. The fighters took off running across the field pitted with craters towards the impenetrable wall of the smoke screen and the continuous glare of explosions. Many immediately overturned in the craters, others flew up, thrown up by the explosion of bombs, and fell in a heap of burning debris. Through the haze of the smoke screen, flaming fighters hit by incendiary bullets were visible here and there. And yet, some officers managed to take off. With the courage of blind despair and anger, no longer following any plan, out of order, they entered into a single battle with Soviet aircraft. But this courage served only to the detriment of their own defense. Their scattered efforts could not be a serious obstacle to the work of Soviet aircraft and only forced their own anti-aircraft artillery and machine guns to cease fire.

To what extent, after all, what we are waiting for materializes... Of course, in books and films, "we" fired, and "they" exploded. In real history, it was not quite like that ... But since 1938, Soviet society has been waiting for a war with Germany. It can be said that it called her according to all the rules of primitive magic. Well, it called. How can one not believe in the fact that thought is material, and in God's Providence in history?

As for the statements of officials, "... a lot of" circumstantial evidence "allows us to assume with a high degree of certainty that it was in May

236

In 1941, a decision was made in Moscow to start a large-scale war with Germany, and not sometime in the indefinite future, but in July-August 1941! For example, on May 5, 1941, Stalin gave a speech to graduates of military academies at a reception in the Kremlin. In it, without naming the enemy, he unexpectedly announced that the USSR would wage not a defensive, but an offensive war, for which the country was ready. The question is how ready?

TECHNICAL POTENTIAL OF THE RED ARMY

On June 22, 1941, the Red Army was the largest army in the world. In the border districts and fleets of the USSR there were 3,289,850 soldiers and officers, 59,787 guns and mortars, 12,782 tanks, of which 1,475 were T-34 and KV tanks, and 10,743 aircraft. The three fleets included about 220,000 personnel, 182 ships of the main classes (3 battleships, 7 cruisers, 45 leaders and destroyers, and 127 submarines).

Direct security. The state border was carried by the border units (land and sea) of eight border districts. Together with the operational units and subdivisions of the internal troops, they numbered about 100 thousand people.

These troops were subordinate to five border districts: Leningrad, Baltic Special, Western Special, Kyiv Special and Odessa. From the sea, the actions of the ground forces were to be supported by three fleets: the Northern, the Red Banner Baltic and the Black Sea.

The troops of the Baltic Military District under the command of General F.I. Kuznetsov included the 8th and 11th armies, the 27th army was in formation west of Pskov. These parts were located

1 Solonin M. USSR - Finland. From peace treaty to war. // The truth of Viktor Suvorov. New evidence. M., 2008.

237

Baltic Sea to the southern border of Lithuania, for 300 km.

The troops of the Western Special Military District under the command of General D. G. Pavlov were deployed from the southern border of Lithuania to the Pripyat River on a front 470 km long.

This district included the 3rd, 4th and 10th armies. In addition, formations and units of the 13th Army were formed in the area of Mogilev, Minsk, Slutsk.

The troops of the Kiev Special Military District under the command of General M.P. Kirponos, consisting of the 5th, 6th, 12th and 26th armies and formations of district subordination, occupied positions on the front with a length of 860 km from Pripyat to Lipkan in northern Moldova.

The troops of the Odessa Military District under the command of General Ya. T. Cherevichenko covered the border in the area from Lipkan to the mouth of the Danube, 480 km long.

The troops of the Leningrad Military District under the command of General M.M. Popov were located in the northwestern regions of the USSR (Murmansk region, the Karelian-Finnish SSR and the Karelian Isthmus), as well as on the northern coast of the Estonian SSR and the Hanko Peninsula. The length of the land border in this area reached 1300 km, and the sea border - 380 km. The 7th, 14th, 23rd armies and the Northern Fleet were located here.

But these 186 divisions are only a part of the Red Army, which included 303 divisions with a total strength of 5,400,000 men. In total, 34-37 million potential conscripts lived in the USSR. The number of those called up during the four years of the war amounted to 28,807,150 people.

WEHRMAHT

Suvorov absolutely rightly writes that in the USSR they diligently underestimated the size of the Red Army, the quality of its weapons, and just as diligently exaggerated the size of the Wehrmacht and the quality of its military equipment.

238

The classic way to distort is to compare obviously incomparable values: for example, only heavy tanks in the USSR and ALL tanks of the Third Reich. Or compare ALL artillery of the Wehrmacht only with the number of barrels with a caliber of more than 76 mm in the Red Army.

Back in the USSR, it was believed that the divisions of the Red Army had 8-9 thousand people, while in reality the average division had 12,360 soldiers and officers.

When citing the size of the Red Army, they usually did not take into account the approximately 500,000 people from the additional call-up received in June 1941.

And speaking of the Wehrmacht, they took into account the combat staff, and technical workers, and service staff.

In general, there are a lot of cheating tricks.

If we take into account not all Wehrmacht personnel, but only combat personnel, then its number for the summer of 1941 should be determined at 4.2 million people, of which 1.8 million are citizens of other states, not Germany. Of these, about 3 million people are in the western border districts and troops of the second strategic echelon. There were 23 million potential conscripts in the Reich, of which 21,100,000 were actually called up.

In the troops of the western border districts alone, the Red Army had more than 37 thousand guns and mortars, and in the troops of the Wehrmacht and all its allies - no more than 31 thousand guns.

In addition to motorized artillery, the German infantry division of the first waves had 6,300 horses, almost half of them in the artillery regiment. All artillery of the infantry divisions was horse-drawn. Only the artillery of anti-tank artillery, RGK, tank and motorized infantry divisions was motorized.

There were only 3,300 tanks and 250 self-propelled guns on the border with the USSR, of which 1,600 were light (T-1, T-2, and T-38) and 1,610 medium (T-Z and T-4). Against 1610 medium tanks of the Wehrmacht in the western districts of the USSR, there were 160 heavy and medium tanks KV and T-34, far superior

239

German in fighting qualities. And against 1,600 German light tanks, there were about 9,000 Soviet light tanks, in no way inferior to the Nazi ones (excluding 2,000 tanks of the mechanized corps of the second strategic echelon).

Against all 3,046 Nazi combat aircraft (1,067 fighters, 1,417 bombers and 562 reconnaissance aircraft), the air forces of the western districts, fleets and long-range bomber aviation (DBA) had 9917 combat aircraft, including in the districts - 7133, in the DBA - 1339 and in the fleets - 1445.

The Soviet Air Force accepted aircraft of new types from factories 3719, since aircraft of the 1939-1940 model should also be taken into account among the new ones. DB-ZF, Ar-2, Su-2, Tu-2, Yak-4, Pe-8, BB-2, of which there were more than a thousand. The Wehrmacht, out of all 3046 combat aircraft, had less than 2 thousand new ones, if we exclude obsolete Yu-87, Xe-111, Do-217, etc.

What do we end up with? That's right: the overwhelming superiority of the Red Army over the Wehrmacht in the quantity and quality of tanks and aircraft. It is not surprising that the leadership of the USSR was not afraid of a potential adversary.

Later, Stalin was blamed many times for not declaring a general mobilization and for not sending troops into the fortified areas prior to the Nazi attack. If this is a mistake, then only in assessing the combat capability of the troops. Stalin and the People's Commissariat of Defense believed that 186 divisions and all the accumulated strength would be enough to repel any sudden attack by the Third Reich and all its allies.

Judging by the number of divisions and military equipment, Stalin is absolutely right: the Red Army is much stronger than the Wehrmacht. If Stalin made a mistake, it was not because he miscalculated divisions.

Probably, the war between the Third Reich and the USSR was inevitable because each of them claimed world domination, and so far no one has succeeded in creating a second globe. In addition, "dear allies" do not

240

trusted each other. They could hardly reach an agreement.

It is no coincidence that both the Third Reich and the USSR kept large contingents of troops on the common border. They held a general parade, signed agreements, exchanged valuable experience... And on the border to

On June 22, 1941, according to Meltyukhov!, the following forces stood:

| Quantity: German Ratio ' Divisions 166 1.15:1 Soldier 4306800 | 1153

TEU E r cert EE 2 , Tanks and assault | 15 687 | 4171 3.8:1

' launch guns | us a= ay EE EE , Aircraft | 10 743 4846 | 2271

| Artillery - weapons - 1.4: 1

| diy and mortar

Soviet troops are stronger. At the same time, the Nazis did not have heavy tanks (more than 40 tons), while the Red Army had 564 vehicles (504 of the latest KVs and 59 T-35s); the Nazis had 990 medium tanks (more than 20 tons), and the Red Army had 1373, including 892 of the latest T-34s and 481 T-40s. But the Nazi troops are also at the ready. As they got up in 1939, they stand for two years ... long before the Barbarossa plan.

The global inevitability of war was supplemented by many small mutual jabs.

The USSR seized more than it "was supposed to" under the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact (that's why it took three new secret protocols specifying the boundaries of the zones of occupation - and all three in favor of the USSR).

Probably, the question was only one: when exactly and who will attack whom. And here, bewilderment really arises: why did Hitler choose such an inconvenient

1 See: Meltyukhov M.I. Stalin's missed chance. M., 2000.

241

time to attack? If he had attacked after the conquest of Britain, everything would have been clear. And so, before the Sea Lion operation, the outbreak of war with the USSR meant a war on two fronts. The Nazis and the Wehrmacht were very afraid of such a war - according to the experience of the First World War. Why did they go for it? , Firstly, because they were convinced that Britain is not

trouble. At least for now.

Secondly, it was impossible to make peace with Britain.

Thirdly, the USSR could not be used against Britain.

WHAT WAS THIS ARMY FOR?

In the USSR, it was usually said that the Soviet Union since 1939 "begins to actively prepare for entry into the war." In preparation, the size of the Red Army is increased, industry is transferred from a six-day to a seven-day week, the working day is increased by an hour, a law on criminal liability for being late and absenteeism is introduced, and the right to quit "at one's own will" is abolished.

But why, in fact, is it "preparing"? The USSR has been in a state of war since September 17, 1939. He annexed 3 countries, partitioned Poland, gnawed off pieces from Romania, fought the Winter War with Finland and started a new war with her at the same time as the Nazis attacked.

All measures to strengthen the rear can be fully explained not by preparation, but by natural changes in the laws and customs of the belligerent country.

This also explains the launch of serial production of new military equipment: the latest aircraft, tanks, Katyusha rocket launchers, etc.

Troops are being drawn to the western borders? But it was not only Hitler who did not trust Stalin. Stalin also did not trust Hitler. He was getting ready too. (Yes, and why these

242

the two and their entourage were supposed to trust each other? They were not so naive.)

We know quite a lot about the Barbarossa plan. Documents on the plans of the Soviet leadership by June 22, 1941, orders of the People's Commissariat of Defense and the Kyiv Military District in the first hours and days of the war have not been declassified to this day. There are separate documents... But they are very eloquent.

"Considerations on the Fundamentals of the Strategic Deployment of the Armed Forces of the USSR" – September 18, 1940

"Updated plan for the strategic deployment of the Armed Forces of the USSR" - March 11, 1941

"Considerations on the plan for the strategic deployment of the forces of the Soviet Union in case of war with Germany and its allies"! - May 1941

And finally, "a note from the chief of staff of the Kyiv Air Defense on the decision of the Military Council of the Southwestern Front on the deployment plan for 1940"². |

In essence, this is one and the same document, refined and refined many times.

In total, the Red Army included 61 tank and 31 motorized rifle divisions, 12,400 tanks, not counting thousands of machine-gun tankettes.

This huge invading army was supposed to implement the doctrine of "little bloodshed and on foreign territory." It's hard to say what about "little blood", but about foreign territory - that's for sure. According to all these documents, the enemy troops were not supposed to stay on the territory of the USSR for more than a day. This is if the enemy will attack first at all. And it was considered better "under no circumstances to give the initiative to the German command, preempt the enemy and attack the German army at the moment when it is in the stage of deployment".

! Military history magazine. 1992, No. 1 and 2. 2 Russia—XX century. Documentation. 1941 Book. 1. M., 1998.

243

And in general, "our operational training, the training of troops should be aimed at ensuring in practice the complete defeat of the enemy already at a time when he has not yet had time to gather all his forces"!

Like this. Attack first, do not wait for the full deployment of enemy troops. And - to someone else's territory. By the 30th day of the war, the Red Army was supposed to go "to the front of Ostrolenka, r. Narew, Lovich, Lodz, Kreutzburg, Oppeln, Olomouc. That is, to be located 300-350 km from the new border of the USSR, on the territory of Poland and the Czech Republic.

The next stage, spelled out less clearly, is "to seize the territory of former Poland and East Prussia."

In the same way, by the way, in the Barbarossa plan, the immediate plans were clearly spelled out, the subsequent ones less definitely. The date of the invasion is not earlier than July 10-15. Not exactly? But Hitler postponed the day of the attack on Belgium and France 9 times. The day of the attack on the USSR - three times. All transfers and clarifications of this kind are within the normal range when planning operations of this magnitude.

Among the models that were considered in the USSR was the following: the Nazis attacked Belarus with the forces of 50 divisions. And the Red Army, with the forces of 44 divisions, holds them back and at the same time strikes from the south against Krakow. 44 defending divisions can really hold off 50 attackers... An excellent plan, but to implement it, 44 divisions would like to hold someone back.

Could the Red Army in 1941 attack the Wehrmacht, defeat it, capture and occupy Germany? Could she pass through Germany to the English Channel, break into France, reach the Pyrenees and the Mediterranean?

From a technical standpoint, yes. 303 divisions,

1 Meltyukhov M.A. Stalin's missed chance. M., 2000.

244

11 thousand tanks, almost 10 thousand aircraft, 40 thousand large-caliber barrels. This is a colossal force, and there was simply no equal to it in Europe. If everything was decided by the number of tanks and guns, Stalin would have captured the whole world very easily. |

However, the Soviet leadership did not see the disadvantages of the Red Army, and they are very large.

CONS OF THE RED ARMY

Soviet people value everything material. Military equipment is very important to them. Much more important is the spirit of the troops, the psychology of the soldiers, their trust in the officers and the entire leadership of the country...

Technique for them constantly turns out to be more important than the people themselves, including more important than their qualifications.

In fact, qualifications were not very good in the Wehrmacht either. By the beginning of 1939, 12 Wehrmacht army corps were formed from 38 divisions, with a total strength of 582 thousand people. By September 1939, there were already 3,214,000 people in the Wehrmacht, and by 1941, 7,234,000 (including both combat and non-combat personnel). With such a rapid increase in the size of the army, many soldiers remained ill-prepared ... from the point of view of a professional army.

Certainly.

But, firstly, in the Wehrmacht and primarily in the German units, excellent specialists served in non-commissioned officer positions.

A single rank for ordinary soldiers in the Wehrmacht, like the Red Army (Red Army, Red Navy, private), did not exist even within the military branch. Ordinary soldiers were named according to their specialty, POSITIONS.

Privates in different parts had different names. A private in the mountain rifle units was called Jareg (hunter); private in the cavalry - Keyyyəg (horseman). Ordinary artilleryman - Kapopieg (shooter). Private tanker - Rapkhegysyikkhe (tank gunner). And in the motorized infantry - already Raptegogepa er (tank grenadier).

245

The foreman (sergeant major) in different branches of the military was all the more rigidly separated from the foreman in another branch of the army. zapzaab\$ea/lee! - this is the chief foreman of the medical service, who has nothing to do with the foreman-blacksmith (VabBessShagte\$ er) or with the foreman-sapper - Eyyiperÿrÿopÿegÿÿabÿe1ameBeGem. And so on up to the foreman-pigeon breeder (For \$6 pevaibepteÿ1ÿÿeg).

And the common German word for soldier "Oer Soiai" was used only as a collective name.

Secondly, at least part of the officer corps was well trained.

There are relatively few officers, their qualifications and morale are traditionally high.

Soviet platoons and companies were much less well trained than their German opponents. During the war, the gap between the training of the soldiers of the Red Army and the Wehrmacht gradually narrowed: the Red Army gained experience. In the Wehrmacht, by 1943, many qualified soldiers were knocked out, and new conscripts were trained hastily and poorly.

But if the gap narrowed in the course of hostilities, it means that before they began, the soldiers of the Red Army were trained poorly and poorly. This is true.

Pilots in the USSR, upon leaving the school, had only 40-50 flight hours. In the Wehrmacht - about 400 hours.

It is useful to look at the Red Army through the eyes of Nazi generals: many of them wrote and published their memoirs. He saw the Red Army as a huge, unwieldy crowd of unprepared, low-initiative people. These people do not know how to use their military equipment, mistreat it and often break it. They are brave on the offensive and tenacious on the defensive, but have little confidence in their superiors and are easily panicked.

The units of the Red Army seemed to the Nazis not able to clearly interact with each other, deprived of reliable communications and little help to each other.

This picture may irritate the "patriot

246

Comrade" of the Soviet spill. It is no coincidence that V. Suvorov is so popular: after all, he said that the USSR had no technical backlog! The thesis of lagging behind in modern Russia most often causes purely emotional protest and irritation. But this is how the Nazis saw the Red Army. And let me remind you again - the Wehrmacht itself was not very professional. The army of the British Empire was much better prepared and trained than the army of the Third Reich.

It is difficult to imagine an army that would have a better material part than the Red Army, but which would be worse able to dispose of this wealth.

It is very characteristic that the Nazis asserted that one of the main reasons for the tactical shortcomings of the Red Army was insufficient mechanization. How so?! After all, there were significantly more combat vehicles in the Red Army than in the Wehrmacht?! Yes, but there were just a lot fewer transport vehicles.

The Red Army is the only major European army that has not adopted armored personnel carriers throughout the war. Motorized infantry was usually transported on the armor of tanks, most of the infantry moved on foot.

Most often this is explained by the "need" to produce as many tanks as possible. Since all industrial capacities were occupied, the production of armored personnel carriers would inevitably lead to a decrease in the number of produced tanks. What is characteristic: during the war, the command of the Red Army considered armored personnel carriers as an unnecessary luxury, but after the war, a program of extensive mechanization of the Red Army was launched.

In fact, the decrease in the number of produced tanks could well be compensated by the training of tankers and the production of armored personnel carriers ... With greater qualification of tankmen and tanks, fewer would be required to perform the same tasks.

So not in insufficient production capacity

247

The point here is not in tactical doctrines per se. The point is in the special structure of the brains of Soviet people: they consistently believed that technology is more important than people, a sense of duty is more important than comfort, including psychological comfort, and the fulfillment of the tasks set by the Party is much more important than preserving the life and health of people. That is, again, it is not the person who is important, but only the result of his work.

AN ARMY FROM ANOTHER ERA

This feature of the Red Army and the entire Soviet society is very characteristic of the beginning of the period of industrialism, for the end of the 18th century - the first half of the 19th century. At that time, industrial products were produced on very simple machines, and the qualifications of the workers were not high. Therefore, it was profitable to force the worker to "plow" for 14-16 hours a day. The machine was important: it was rough, you couldn't break it, but it cost many times more than the labor of a worker. The result of labor is important: both raw materials and finished products cost much more than the worker is paid.

But the worker is not important: his work is not valuable. If he is sick, tired, old, he can easily be replaced by another.

In Russia, the industrial revolution was delayed, in the Russian Empire and at the beginning of the twentieth century there were many industries where the worker is less valuable than the machine tool, raw materials and manufactured product. The Bolsheviks, having seized power, "froze" Russia, stopped social development. In the middle of the 20th century, many Russians thought the same as they did half a century ago. Why, and Marxism was born in early industrial society.

In Europe, in the middle of the 19th century, machines appeared that required qualifications from the worker. The longer a worker needs to be trained, the more valuable he is. Gem has a higher share of his salary in the cost of the product. The more difficult the machine is, and thus the easier it is to break it if the worker does not like to work or he wants to spoil the owner.

248

There were such productions in Russia, but by the beginning of the First World War, the industry had only just begun to switch to them. Germany, on the other hand, almost did not catch the first stage of industrialism, immediately moving on to skilled labor. For this reason, by the beginning of the 20th century, Germany had pulled ahead, overtaking Britain and France. That is why in Germany there was no mass impoverished lumpenism, as in Britain.

The army of mass conscription is also a kind of "mass production". In the USSR, this "production" is organized according to the laws of another era.

One can give examples for a long time of how the Nazi generals and officers are perplexed: why do the Soviet commanders so do not take care of their soldiers?! For many of them, this serves as convincing proof that the Jewish commissars are deliberately destroying the Russian people.

A question has survived that legends attribute to Halder, Weidling, Pauwels, even Dwight Eisenhower. He was asked in different versions of the legend to either Konev or Zhukov. In all versions of the legend, the Soviet commander is asked the following question:

Why do you care so little about the lives of your soldiers?

To which the Soviet commander shrugs his shoulders and answers quite bravo:

We fight our way! Stalinist!

But this is not only about Stalinism.

ARMY NATIONAL OR CLASS?

The very spirit of the Wehrmacht was originally completely different from that of the Red Army. After all, the Red Army was initially created as a "class" army, an army of the "proletariat". The Wehrmacht was formed as an imperial army, including various national units. The ruling party tried many times to bring the army under control, but there was never a post of commissar in the Wehrmacht. Even if party power existed, it was at a distance.

249

And in the Red Army, each unit from a battalion and larger had, in addition to the commander, also a commissar. Such a system was introduced even during the Civil War. Only in April 1940, after the Finnish war, the rights of commissars were curtailed, they lost the right to cancel the order of the unit commander. Prior to that, the commissar confirmed or canceled any order of the commander of any importance.

parts.

Almost all commissars knew nothing about military matters. Yes, this was not at all what was required of them, but only absolute personal devotion to the CPSU (b) and personally to Comrade Stalin.

Of course, there were very different people among the commissars. Some honestly helped "their" commanders, others were removed from everything except the "political education" of the personnel. Still others gave valuable instructions and even began to command themselves. An attempt to rein in the commissar could cost the commander dearly.

In addition, in the army units, the Komsomol represented a very independent system. If a soldier of the Red Army did not join the Komsomol, he was quickly accepted into the Komsomol. And the Komsomol meetings were going on ... closed. Soldiers gathered for meetings, discussed commanders and commissars, and sometimes wrote denunciations against them and even directly refused to obey. In fact, ordinary soldiers of any unit at any moment could understand what a charm this Komsomol was, and practically get out of control. And an attempt to influence the soldiers could immediately turn into a denunciation for the unit commander "Dear organs".

ABOUT "DEAR ORGANS"

Special department... This was the name of the military counterintelligence unit, which was part of the Red Army. Special departments were created on December 19, 1918 by the decision of the Bureau of the Central Committee of the RCP (b), according to which the front and army Chekas were merged with the bodies

250

Military control, and on their basis a new body was formed - the Special Department of the Cheka under the Council of People's Commissars of the RSFSR.

Theoretically - military counterintelligence. In fact, it is a system of surveillance and control over troops, a single centralized system of security agencies in the troops. In 1934-1938. military counterintelligence as a Special, then - the 5th Department, is part of the Main Directorate of State Security (GUGB) of the NKVD of the USSR. In March 1938, with the abolition of the GUGB, on the basis of the 5th Department, the 2nd Directorate (special departments) of the NKVD of the USSR was created. Already in September 1938, the Special Department was recreated as the 4th Department of the GUGB. Subordinate to the special departments (OO) in the Red Army, the Red Army, the troops of the NKVD.

That is, the Special Department exists in the army, but it is not subordinate to the army.

A special department of the NKVD monitored the political and moral state of the unit, and also had to identify traitors, spies, saboteurs, terrorists, counter-revolutionary organizations and groups of people conducting anti-Soviet agitation. He conducted investigations under the supervision of the prosecutor's office and referred cases to military tribunals.

From the beginning of the war to October 1941, special departments and detachments of the NKVD troops detained 657,364 servicemen who had fallen behind their units and fled from the front. In this mass, 1,505 spies and 308 saboteurs were identified and exposed. That is, enemy agents

less than 2,000 arrested. And more than 65,000 military men were detained! For anti-Soviet agitation and “wrong” talk, nothing else.

ABOUT STRANGE STALIN'S REPRESSIONS IN THE RED ARMY

About the "unjustified Stalinist repressions" in the Red Army in 1937, only the lazy did not write. Tears were shed about the genius of the repressed commanders, starting from the Khrushchev era. We'll have to talk about this...

ÿ See: Degtyarev K. SMERSH. M.: Yauza-Eksmo, 2009. 251

The cruel Stalinist repressions in the Red Army began with the “Tukhachevsky case”, which was officially called: the case of the “anti-Soviet Trotskyist military organization”. This is a case on charges of 9 major Soviet military leaders of organizing a military conspiracy to seize power. Of these, the army commissar of the 1st rank, head of the Political Directorate of the Red Army, first deputy. People's Commissar of Defense of the USSR Ya.B. Gamarnik shot himself on the eve of his arrest. The rest were judged.

These 9 top leaders of the Red Army were accused of

— transfer in 1932-1935 to representatives of the German General Staff of secret information of a military nature;

- development in 1935 of a detailed operational plan for the defeat of the Red Army in the main directions of the offensive of the German and Polish armies;

- preparation of terrorist acts against members of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks and the Soviet government;

— preparing a plan for an armed “capture of the Kremlin” and arresting the leaders of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks and the Soviet government, that is, preparing a military coup scheduled for May 15, 1937 of the year.

The purpose of the organization was declared a violent seizure of power in the USSR in the event of a military defeat from Germany and Poland.

The investigation took less than a month, the court session took place two days after the confirmation of the indictment and took only one day. At the same time, the hearing was closed, the defendants were deprived of the right to defense and appeal against the verdict. The materials of the court do not provide any facts confirming the charges of espionage, conspiracy and preparation of terrorist acts. The verdict of June 11, 1937 is based entirely on the confessions (or is it "confessions"?) of the defendants.

On June 11, 1937, the Special Judicial Presence of the Supreme Court of the USSR sentenced to death with confiscation of property and deprivation of military ranks: Marshal of the USSR M.N. Tukhachevsky, commander of the 1st

252

rank I.E. Yakir, commander of the troops of the Kyiv Military District, commander of the 1st rank I.P. Uborevich, Commander of the Belarusian Military District; commander of the 2nd rank A.I. Kork, head of the Military Academy. M. Frunze, commander R.P. Eideman, V.K. Putna, attaché at the USSR embassy in Great Britain, B.M. Feldman, head of the Department for Commanding Staff of the Red Army, and V.M. Primakov, Deputy Commander of the Leningrad Military District.

The sentence was carried out a few hours after the end of the trial on the night of June 12, 1937.

A typical "Stalinist" process, not bothering with evidence. It is not surprising that many contemporaries and subsequent researchers had doubts about the validity of the sentence and strong suspicions of illegal methods of obtaining testimony.

On January 13, 1957, all 9 were rehabilitated for lack of corpus delicti. According to the Rehabilitation Commission, the confessions of the defendants were obtained using torture and beatings. And there is simply no other evidence other than self-incrimination.

The difficulty is that signals about the presence of a strong opposition to Stalin in the Red Army were received many times already in 1929-1934. This information did not come out of the bowels of the secret services, but Stalin certainly knew. And there are materials, in addition to their own confessions.

A similar case about a conspiracy at the top of the Red Army was developed by the OGPU as early as 1930. Stalin was presented with materials stating that a group of major military leaders headed by Tukhachevsky was preparing to seize power and assassinate Stalin himself. The information is based only on the testimony of the arrested teachers of the Military Academy - Kakurin and Troitsky. Tukhachevsky categorically denied everything at the confrontation and was found not guilty!

1 See: O. V. Khlevnyuk, Politburo. Mechanisms of political power in the 30s. M., 1996.

253

According to some researchers, the real reason for the process was a conspiracy to seize power. The accusations of espionage were intended to make the process more acceptable to the rest of the military establishment.

Judging by the way the Red Army behaved in 1941, Stalin had very good reasons to believe that the conspiracy of the top military leaders was a reality.

REPRESSIONS IN THE RKKA 1937-1938

The Tukhachevsky case became the trigger for the start of large-scale repressions in the Red Army. Of the 8 members of the "special presence", which passed the verdict on June 11, 1937, 4 were shot. Marshal V.K. Blucher, according to some sources, was shot, according to others, he died under torture. Only V.V. survived. Ulrich, S.M. Budyonny and B.M. Shaposhnikov.

In 1937-1938 they were shot: out of 5 marshals - 3; out of 5 commanders of the 1st rank - 3; out of 10 commanders of the P rank - 10; out of 57 commanders - 50; out of 186 division commanders - 154; out of 16 army commissars Guy P ranks - 16; out of 26 corps commissars - 25; out of 64 divisional commissars — 58; out of 456 regimental commanders - 4012. The monstrous scale of the "purge", of course.

The "head" of the army has been destroyed, there are no words. What about lower-level officers?

According to the Stalinist publicist I. Pykhalov, with reference to archival sources, during 1937-1938. in the army, taking into account all subsequent revisions of cases (changes in articles and reinstatements), were 17,776 people repressed? command staff, of which 9701 were dismissed and 8075 were arrested.

See: Prudnikova E., Kolpakidi A. Double conspiracy. Secrets of Stalin's repressions. M., 2006.

2 See: Sokolov B. Exterminated marshals. Smolensk, 2000, pp. 82-202.

3 See: Pykhalov I.V. The Great Slandered War. M., 2005.

254

V. G. Klevtsov claims that in 1937-1938. 35.2 thousand officers were physically destroyed, D. A. Volkogonov! and D. M. Projector? write about 40 thousand repressed. N. G. Pavlenko writes:

"... in the army alone, from May 1937 to September 1938, 36,761 military leaders were repressed"3. A. M. Samsonov writes about 43 thousand", N. M. Ramanichev - about 44 thousand>., Yu. A. Gorkov - about 48 7735.

In journalism, even more abrupt figures are given: 50,000 repressed, and even: "More than 70,000 commanders of the Red Army were destroyed by Stalin BEFORE THE WAR."

V. N. Rapoport and Yu. A. Geller write: "Therefore, we are forced to consider that the decline in personnel during the two years of the purge amounted to approximately 100 thousand people." L. A. Kirshner claims that 50% of the officers were repressed: "It is believed that in the pre-war period 44,000 command personnel, more than half of the officer corps, were repressed."

The figures are so contradictory that it makes sense to clarify: the number of officer corps in 1938 was about 180 thousand people. Of those dismissed in 1937-1938. 38 thousand commanders and political workers

! See: Volkogonov D. A. Triumph and tragedy. Political portrait of IV Stalin. In 2 books. Book. P. Ch. 1. M., 1989.

2 See: Projector D. M. Aggression and catastrophe. Top military leadership of Nazi Germany in World War II. M., 1972.

3 Pavlenko N. G. Reflections on the fate of the military leadership. Moscow: Knowledge, 1989.

4 Samsonov A.M. The Second World War. 1939-1945. M., 1990.

> Ramanichev N.M. Is the Red Army the strongest of all? // Military Historical Journal. 1991, no. 12.

6 Gorkov Yu. A. The Kremlin. Bid. General Staff. Tver, 1995.

7 Kumanev G. A. War and evacuation in the USSR // New and recent history. 2006, No. 6.

8 Yakovlev A. N. Zhirinovskiy and other "patriots" in bold quotes // Izvestia. April 25, 1995. No. 76 (24435).

9 Rapoport V. N., Geller Yu. A. Treason to the Motherland. M., 1995.

10 Eve and the beginning of the war: Documents and materials / Comp. L. A. Kirshner. L., 1991.

nikov in 1939-1940. 12 thousand returned to the army, 9 thousand were dismissed due to old age or illness. No more than 18 thousand officers were dismissed from the army for political reasons. And only 9.5 thousand of them were arrested.

It is important that the scale of repression is GREAT. So great that after Stalin's death, his enemies could easily exaggerate their scale a hundredfold.

DESTRUCTION OF THE BEST?

Naturally, the question arose - why? What is Stalin's schizophrenia? Power struggle? Already at that time, contemporaries confidently said: Stalin destroyed the best. On June 11, 1937, the German magazine "Verfront" wrote in the article "the new face of the Red Army": "After the trial ... Stalin ordered the execution of eight of the best commanders [of the Red Army]. Thus ended a brief period of reorganization of the Red Army command... Military qualifications were sacrificed for the politics and security of the Bolshevik system."

Is it a qualification?

There was even a version put forward that the repressions against the top of the Red Army were caused by the beautiful operation of the German intelligence: in an effort to weaken the Red Army before the war, the German intelligence

"threw" Stalin such a "disinformation".

The defeat of the Red Army in 1941 was repeatedly associated with the Stalinist purge of the Red Army. Both Zhukov and Rokossovsky are thickly hinting at this, and a modern publicist even claims that "Without war, almost the entire magnificent officer corps, the backbone of the Red Army, died in the dungeons and camps of the NKVD!"

The opinion of the Soviet intelligentsia of the 1960s was brilliantly expressed by Rasul Gamzatov in the poem "People and Shadows" composed in 1960-1962:

'
Koval V.S. "Barbarossa": the origins and history of the greatest crime of imperialism. Kyiv, 1989.

256

Summons have been sent to the reserve fighters, The German infantry is breaking through. Hurry up, Marshal Tukhachevsky, present yourself to the troops in battle guise.

Let your genius again shine in the order And surprise the stunned world.

Let Fedko send liaison officers to you And dress Yakir on the radio.

But they, sentenced to the highest measure, Do not resurrect even God, but for now

In battles, irreparable losses

Are orphaned troops.

True, Hitler thought quite differently: after the conspiracy of the top of the Wehrmacht in July 1944, he said: "The Wehrmacht betrayed me, I am dying at the hands of my own generals. Stalin did a brilliant deed by purging the Red Army and getting rid of the rotten aristocrats."

The majority of "progressive-minded people" believed then, and still believe now, that the "traitor trials" and purges of 1935-1938 are outrageous examples of barbarism, ingratitude and a manifestation of the bad qualities of Stalin himself, who envied brilliant commanders like Yakir and Tukhachevsky.

The difficulty is to find confirmation of the symptoms of genius of these individuals. Yakir is famous mainly for the fact that during the Civil War he kept a detachment of 500 Chinese executioners with him. Tukhachevsky tried to write theoretical works... Fortunately, they were published more than once, you can read them and see for yourself: there is nothing in them except ideological incantations! It is no coincidence that V. Suvorov devoted a book with the expressive title "Purification" to "repressions in the Red Army"? Suvorov is in complete solidarity with Hitler: "cleansed" from the revolution

1 See: Tukhachevsky M.N. Selected works in 2 vols. M., 1964. 2 Suvorov V. Cleansing. M., 2005.

9 A. Isaev 257

The army of the army became much more combat-ready. If there were no "purification", and victory in World War II would become unlikely.

Methods, of course, are monstrous, but besides Stalin's cruelty, it is worth noting his simply implausible foresight and foresight. However, he had the opportunity many times to observe ideological revolutionaries up close. Apparently, he did not like this audience much ...

And not one Stalin did not like. Arguing with the "ideological" on the eve of the "great purge" at a meeting of command personnel, the future Marshal I.S. Konev threw a very careless phrase: "If the hour comes

tests, then what are we going to fight with - with a rifle or with Marxism?

Paradoxically, the repressions had a positive impact on the educational level of the highest command personnel of the Red Army.

In the first half of the 1930s. the proportion of Soviet military leaders with higher military education ranged from 30 to 40%. Before the start of the repression, only 29% had an academic education. And in 1938, there were already 38% of such commanders, in 1941 - 52%.

"... From May 1, 1937 to April 15, 1938, none of the 3 arrested deputies of the People's Commissar of Defense had an academic education, 2 of those appointed had it. Of the district commanders: 3 "academicians" were arrested, 8 were appointed; deputy district commanders: respectively: arrested 4 with higher military education, appointed - 6; chiefs of staff of the districts - those arrested did not have an academic education, 4 out of 10 appointed had it; corps commanders — 12 with higher military education were arrested, 19 were appointed; corps chiefs of staff - 14 "academicians" were arrested, 22 were appointed. And so on for all positions, with the exception of division commanders. 33 arrested commanders had

academy

i Cherushev N.S. 1937: The elite of the Red Army on Calvary. M., 2003. S. 15.

258

military education, and among those appointed there were only 27. On the whole, the number of those appointed with a higher military education exceeds the number of those arrested with a similar education by 45%. Thus, the repressions did not lower the educational level of the categories of officers affected by them, they affected the level of education of senior and middle officers who were promoted to higher positions. Archival data indicate that these were, as a rule, the most highly trained commanders.

Why? Yes, because the "great purge" destroyed the Bonapartes who received the highest posts, adjoining the victors in the Civil War in a timely manner. And they were replaced by people who served in the Red Army for many years without joining the CPSU (b). And they joined it, already being chief regiments and division commanders. First, a military career, then joining the CPSU (6): when the situation requires it.

Judge for yourself: this is the time when the victims of repression joined the CPSU (6): Gamarnik - 1916, Primakov - 1914, Tukhachevsky - 1918, Uborevich - 1917, Fedko - 1917, Yakir - 1917, Kork - 1918, Eideman - 1918, Putna - 1917.

And here are the terms of entry into the CPSU (6) of those who replaced them: Vasilevsky - 1938, Zhukov - 1919, Konev - 1918, Malinovsky - 1926, Rokossovsky - 1919, Tolbukhin - 1938.

The difference is obvious. The ideologists were replaced by pragmatists.

AGAIN ABOUT THE ATMOSPHERE IN THE ARMY

So, the repressions were not at all catastrophic in scale. Moreover, they did not "orphan" the troops at all. Perhaps the "purges" should be considered genius.

! Gerasimov G. I. The real impact of the repressions of 1937-1938. on the officer corps of the Red Army // Russian Historical Journal. 1999, No. 1, pp. 48-49.

259

Stalin's political move. At the same time, he eliminated the "Corsican danger": the prospect of a military conspiracy, got rid of another batch of revolutionary slovenliness and raised the level of the high command of the army.

In this sense, everything is just wonderful.

But how was the army supposed to react to the "purges"? Her officers? After all, what happens: suddenly they "take" generals and officers. They are being tortured. Destroy under pretexts that are completely unobvious. Processes are closed. If there was a conspiracy, where is its evidence? There is no irrefutable evidence of the guilt of the higher command staff. There are only vague rumors that can be interpreted as you like.

It seems that repressions against the authorities are even beneficial for the middle and junior officers: after the army loses its top, many vacant posts appear. There is a chance to make an enchanting career. Yes... but:

Firstly, military discipline does not increase because of this, because many junior commanders begin to look thoughtfully at their elders ... And the elders begin to smile ingratiatingly at commissars, Komsomol members and subordinates in general.

Secondly, everyone who has received a promotion thinks not so much about military duty, but about when they will come for him, what they can blame him for and how he could survive.

There is a career... And what about confidence in the strength of your position? And not only service, but in general his position as a Soviet officer?

By repressing and "removing" the top of the army, the government can protect itself, destroy dangerous seditious and frighten the next. Through such repressions, perhaps, the army is "cleansed" of worthless and adventurous people. I will not argue. But it is impossible to build a professional, truly strong army in this way.

And in the repressions themselves, and in the way they were carried out,

260

the main negative quality of the Red Army and the entire Soviet system is strikingly pronounced: ignoring the individual, the inner world, pathological disrespect for the person.

It cannot be ruled out that Stalin carried out an ingenious system of preparing the Red Army for war. It may well be that he managed to make the army better, and its senior command staff more professional, more educated, smarter, more reliable. May be.

But at the same time, he made this senior commanding staff less self-confident, less trusting in their government, less courageous and less ready to lay down their lives for the good of their state. Since 1937, any military leader simply had to live, constantly looking around nervously. After all, at any moment they could come for him ... And for what - they will find. The system is not predictable. They have already exterminated some of their people, guided by some not very clear considerations. On the basis of what "considerations" they will come for you - you never know. And it's not clear. It is impossible to calculate. Understanding is impossible. It remains only to walk and look around nervously all the time.

V. Suvorov describes the Red Army of 1941 as huge in terms of numbers, the greatest army in the world. This army owns the most advanced technology for that time. It has the largest caliber guns, the most powerful tanks, the fastest and most efficient aircraft in the world.

I believe that V. Suvorov's description is correct... but it is not enough.

The Red Army was staffed with poorly trained, low-skilled people who did not know how to dispose of military equipment, did not know how to interact well and had little trust both in each other and in the government of their country.

Even worse, in the Red Army, the principle was rigorously applied: "business is more important than a person" and "mechanisms are more important than a person." Having received the order, the soldiers and officers of the Red Army quite reasonably assumed that they were safe.

261

no one cares. And they showed caution - because the salvation of the drowning was the work of the drowning themselves.

The Red Army controlled all the time, creating several control mechanisms at once: special departments, commissars, Komsomol organizations, mass "purges" of the army elite.

The Red Army was a frightened army, unsure of itself and its strength. Its employees, from a soldier to a marshal, were not proactive, they were afraid to make independent decisions.

Such an army is reliable in the sense that it is unlikely to stage a military coup. But she is not reliable in combat.

And with this army, Stalin was going to win world domination? Create a Zemshar Republic of Soviets?

ABOUT TERMS

So both sides were planning an attack. Both Nazis and Communists. Preparations for war never take place openly. But even the available data clearly show how both the Red Army and the Wehrmacht are preparing for war. In the language of the military, this is called "counter strategic concentration and deployment of the armed forces of enemy countries."

Could the Nazis have been planning an attack not on June 22, but at a later date? Quite ... And for an earlier one too. It is even better to attack earlier, because then there will be more time to attack in the summer, in the warm season.

Richard Sorge several times passed on the dates of the Third Reich's attack on the USSR: April 15... May 1, 15, 20... June 15... Not a single date has been confirmed, but this is already the second question.

Could the USSR strike first? Yes. If such actions were part of his plans, then definitely
- Yes.

And it could be any time too. Suvorov considers July 15 to be the likely date. For building models -

262

what could have happened during the first attack of the USSR, such a period is no better and no worse than any other. We will proceed from it as from "probable" or even "possible".

VIRTUALITY: JULY 15, 1941

On July 13, 1941, the defector Ivan Ivanov swam across the Bug and ran to the location of the Nazi unit. In terrible German, he loudly shouted that he knew a great secret, and "Stalin is kaput!" He shouted so that he woke up the sentry. The sentry at first wanted to shoot Ivanov, but then he just gave him a kick and told him to get out. Ivanov hung around the location of the unit until morning and shouted loudly. In the morning he was handed over to intelligence, and there he told about Stalin's plans to attack the Third Reich on the morning of July 15th.

- Where did you get such information?

- In the bath, the guys told.

How do you guys know this?

- One of them has an affair with the mistress of the lieutenant of the special unit, she told.

Ivanov was not given back, but no one, of course, thinks to believe him. Well, how can an ordinary person know the plans of the command and leadership of the state ?!

Even before that, it was as if a journalist, but in fact a double spy of the USSR and the Reich, Grisha Zabolotnik from Argentina, transmitted information that the USSR was preparing an attack on the Third Reich. He has already transmitted such messages several times: about the attack of the USSR on the Third Reich on April 15 ... May 1, 15, 20 ... June 15 ...!. They don't believe the caretaker either, something in his information is seriously "wrong".

! Indeed, Richard Sorge transmitted messages several times about different dates for the attack of the Third Reich. All the dates he gave were wrong. The reasons for such inaccuracy in the reports are still being debated, either referring to the "pre-war atmosphere, when everything was permeated with the expectation of war", or to the "misinformation" deliberately slipped by Sorge.

263

And the night falls on July 15, 1941... Since July 10, each division commander has two envelopes: yellow and green. At 10 pm on July 14, division commanders received an order to open the yellow envelope. After reading the text, eat immediately.

The divisional commanders read and summoned the regimental commanders. The war machine has come to an incomprehensible yet, to itself incomprehensible movement.

12am. Sleepy tankers sit in tanks: ordered to wait.

The pilots are warming up the engines. They guess what is starting, but they are also waiting for the order.

At zero hours 30 minutes division commanders tear open the green envelope and read the order. Regimental commanders are present during the reading. The order is received, and on July 15 at 1 am Moscow time, the Red Army, the colossal front from the Baltic to the Black Sea, sets in motion. 3.3 million armed to the teeth, equipped with an incredible amount of military equipment, people are walking, riding, swimming, flying to the west. Bridges and roads are cleared of mines, nothing interferes.

Having risen from their airfields, the planes of the Red Army in a matter of minutes find themselves over the territory of the Reich.

At 4 o'clock in the morning, a terrible bomb load falls on the "peacefully sleeping" airfields of the Third Reich, its garrisons and military units.

At 5:30 the Red Army crosses the border. It easily overwhelmed the border units and began to delve into the territory of the Third Reich.

At about 3:30 am on July 15, 1941, in Berlin, the Soviet Ambassador Dekanozov, standing in front of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Third Reich, Ribbentrop, read out the text of the Soviet declaration on "military countermeasures against the Third Reich." On Stalin's orders, it was forbidden to mention the words "war" and "attack" in the declaration.

Ribbentrop would later write in his memoirs that when Dekanozov read the text of the declaration, his voice

264

sorry, and his eyes were full of tears. After listening to the ambassador, the minister was silent for a long time, and then quietly said: "Is this a war? Do you think we deserve it?" Barely restraining himself, the Soviet ambassador muttered that he did not approve of his government's decision. |

At the same time in Moscow, People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs Vyacheslav Molotov hands the Third Reich Ambassador von Schulenburg a declaration of war. The astonished ambassador quickly recovered his senses and sharply declared: "You will regret having carried out this attack! You will pay dearly for this!" He got up, bowed and, without shaking hands with Molotov, went to the door. Seeing off the ambassador, Molotov whispered: "I was against this attack."

Then in the Third Reich they will spread propaganda tales that the USSR attacked the Third Reich without declaring war. These tales will be repeated in the Third Reich until 1991, that is, until the very time of the collapse and disintegration of the Third Reich.

At 12 noon on July 15, 1941, Goebbels made an official radio address to the citizens of the Third Reich, announcing the Soviet attack on the Third Reich and announcing the start of war.

VIRTUALITY: THE DIRECTION OF THE STRIKES OF THE RED ARMY

Of course, all directions of strikes are designed very conditionally. Let's imagine a certain scheme to make it easier to build a model... And without insisting at all that the plans would be such and only like that.

So, the troops of the Odessa district go to Romania, Hungary, Slovakia. Having crushed these small countries, they must begin to move towards Vienna and Switzerland.

The troops of the Kyiv district strike at Krakow, then at the "underbelly" of Germany proper: Munich, Mannheim, Frankfurt am Main.

The troops of the Belorussian district are attacking Warsaw,

265

volume on Breslau, Frankfurt an der Oder, and in the long run directly on Berlin.

The Baltic district invades Memel and East Prussia, then goes to Danzig and further to Schleswig and Ostemünde. He must finish this part of the campaign in Hamburg and in the Ruhr district.

FOUR SURPRISES

Whatever the plans of the top leadership of the USSR, the Red Army will inevitably face four great surprises.

First surprise: own inner weakness.

Any propaganda, any idea of "liberating the proletarians from the yoke of the bourgeoisie" cannot hide the main thing: the Red Army is committing an act of aggression.

There is a colossal difference in the morale of troops who march on foreign soil and who protect their land.

In reality, the Red Army initially turned out to be a defending army. And when in 1944 she began to fight abroad, she already had the experience of two and a half years of war on her own territory. By that time, she already unambiguously considered herself morally right, and the Soviet Union was a victim of aggression.

In our virtual reality, on July 15, the Red Army attacked the Third Reich. In our reality, the Red Army fled in 1941 and surrendered.

Within a matter of weeks, the entire first strategic echelon of the Red Army was destroyed. The Red Army was "completely defeated, all military equipment was abandoned in the forests,

most of the personnel were captured or died, the few survivors were selected in small groups from the encirclement for several weeks or months!

1 Solonin M. June 22, or When did the Great Patriotic War start? M., 2008. S. 103.

266

If in reality this army fled, from which hangover will now start fighting furiously for Stalin? During an offensive, it is impossible or very difficult to escape and surrender. But the army is fighting sluggishly. She follows orders, but without tension, without readiness to carry out combat missions at any cost. The units of the Red Army miss many opportunities, in each specific case they do only a part of what is possible.

In addition, the Red Army is morally tense... If serious difficulties begin, it will go over to the side of the enemy. |

The second surprise: the readiness of Germany and the German people for war.

This means not only and not so much higher training.

The Red Army is facing fierce resistance: for the Germans, the war is defensive. Danzig and East Prussia are their own land for the Germans. Motherland. Fathers land. The psychology of those on whose land the enemy is marching is the psychology of the Russians, through whose Smolensk and Pskov regions German tanks with a black cross on their armor roll.

In the same way, the Germans consider many cities and regions in Poland and Lithuania to be their land. Danzig, Breslau, Vilna, Lviv-Lviv-Levenburg are German cities. Poles, Lithuanians, Ukrainians consider them theirs - but this does not prevent the Germans from considering them in the same way. After all, the cities of Kyiv and Minsk are the capitals of Ukraine and Belarus, which did not prevent the Russians from considering these cities as their own and fighting for them as part of their Motherland.

From the very first hours of the war, the Red Army marched through the lands of native Germany. For this reason, for the Wehrmacht and all of Germany, this is a defensive war.

The third surprise: a defensive war for all peoples, across whose territory the Red Army is marching. Poles, Ukrainians, Hungarians, Slovaks, Romanians have every reason to consider themselves victims of Soviet aggression.

267

these. No nation likes when an enemy army marches across its land and resists invasion.

In our reality, the peoples of Eastern Europe first experienced all the "charms" of the Nazi occupation, and then already had to deal with the Red Army. During the war, their communist underground became very strong, for which the Red Army was a tribe of dear partygenossen. And even many nationalists were ready to support the Red Army, or at least not to fight with it. Let the "Russians" beat and chase the "Germans", all the same, nothing worse than the "Germans" can be.

In 1944, not all, but many Polish patriots were ready to raise an uprising in the rear of the Nazis, helping the Red Army.

By the way, there is a complete analogy in the Baltic States and Ukraine: after two years of Soviet occupation, Lithuanians, Latvians, Western Ukrainians and Estonians were ready to help the Wehrmacht. For the same reasons: that nothing could be worse than the Soviet occupation.

It is all the more difficult to acquire readiness to support the Red Army because the peoples of Eastern Europe are civilizationally closer to Central Europe than to Russia. For the Serbs and Carpatho-Russians, the Red Army could still be an army of "their own" in terms of culture, but not for the Poles and not for the Lithuanians. In order to support the Red Army, they needed a fierce and brutal occupation of the Third Reich.

There is nothing like this in our virtuality of the attack of the USSR. Unless the Czech Republic, occupied in 1938, may be ready to support the Red Army. And in Poland, separate parts of the Home Army.

On the whole, the Red Army is an aggressor not only for the Germans, but for all the peoples of Eastern Europe.

Surprise four: the weakness of the communist "fifth column" in the places occupied by the Red Army. Of course, with the movement of the Red Army, communists and all leftists in general will come out of the underground and start wars with their governments.

268

But! In reality, the communists of Europe started the Resistance against the Nazi occupation. They acted as patriots of their countries and therefore had such colossal support. In France, in Yugoslavia, in Poland, in Greece, entire regions were liberated by communist partisans. In order for the communists to become strong, it again took a long and brutal Nazi occupation. And for the communists themselves to rise, and for the population to recognize them. In Yugoslavia, Tito's communist army did not become an important factor until 1942. French and Greek red partisans - no earlier than 1943.

In our virtuality, local communists act as traitors helping the conquering army. This confuses them, and even more so the rest of the population.

In any case, it is impossible to imagine the attack of the USSR as an analogue of the attack of the Third Reich: with the same scale of collapse and devastation, mass exodus and unwillingness to fight. |

There will be no flight of the Nazi army, not wanting to fight. The tanks of the Red Army will not move at a speed of 30 km per day. There will be no mass surrender of enemy soldiers.

A very difficult, extremely cruel war awaits the Red Army, in which it will have to fight for every settlement. And it will also fail to come in the role of liberators to the peoples of Eastern Europe. Taking Krakow and Belgrade would mean war with both the Wehrmacht and the local armies and militias. Occupation will mean leaving people in the rear of the Red Army who will willingly and at the first opportunity stab in the back.

All four surprises concern only one aspect of the war: military-strategic. This is a very important aspect, but there are others that must also be taken into account.

269

ASPECTS OF THE LEADING WAR

The outcome of World War II was determined by four factors:

- military-strategic;
- military-diplomatic;
- revolutionary;

— Anglo-Saxon.

The military-strategic and revolutionary aspects are clearly not in favor of the Red Army.

The military-diplomatic situation is also not in favor of the USSR;

For all continental Europeans from Spain to Poland, the Red Army is a very frightening political factor. All the more frightening factor: their own Civil War, which the Red Army will actively help. Let the Communists coming out of the underground be few in number and have no mass support. In our virtuality, it was worth attacking the USSR - the air smelled of civil wars and the World Revolution.

In our reality, the mobilization capabilities of the Third Reich turned out to be much smaller than those of the USSR. In our virtuality, this is not so, because the continental powers will act as Hitler's allies. Moreover, as allies not for fear, but for conscience.

In reality, Franco sent one division of volunteers. But he could move almost his entire army. And the French power of Marshal Pétain can move an army of up to a million bayonets. And Italy can fight in a completely different way. And even countries already conquered by the Nazis.

THE ANGLO-SAXON FACTOR

In reality, Britain and the United States became a huge factor in the victory of the USSR. First, Britain fought the Nazis in North Africa, delaying a significant

270

nye forces. Second, the Lend-Lease Act, passed by the US Congress on March 11, 1941, provided that the President could help any country whose defense was deemed vital to the US. Initially, the USSR was not included in Lend-Lease.

Only after the start of the war between the Third Reich and the USSR, on June 26, 1941, Washington declared that the law on neutrality did not apply to aid to the Soviet Union. And then the Soviet government presented the American and British side with a list of necessary supplies! Instantly.

But before the decision was made, Roosevelt sent his trusted man, Mr. Harry Hopkins, to Europe. After Hopkins considered the results of the negotiations with Stalin "extremely positive", on August 2, 1941, an exchange of notes took place between the USSR and the USA. In its note, the American side announced its decision to render maximum economic assistance to the USSR. On August 9, Roosevelt and Churchill, after talking off the coast of Newfoundland, sent a message to Stalin, assuring him that he would receive help. And proposing to convene a conference in Moscow specifically to discuss this assistance to the USSR, on October 1, 1941, Roosevelt approved the connection of the USSR to Lend-Lease.

The main thing for the Americans was - is the USSR ready to fight the Third Reich until the victorious end of the war? They had good reason to doubt it.

The Lend-Lease Program (from [en - "to lend" and lease - "to rent, hire"]) is a system by which the United States of America, mainly at no cost, transferred ammunition to its allies in World War II , machinery, food and strategic raw materials.

The delivered valuables were not subject to payment if they were lost and used during the war.

Property left after the end of the war and suitable for civilian purposes must be
payment

271

cheno, but not immediately. To pay the US will give long-term loans.

The United States was the only country in the world with sufficient manufacturing capacity to provide such support in a short enough time frame to influence the course of hostilities in 1942.

Of the total supply of \$50.1 billion (about \$700 billion in 2008 prices), Britain received the most: \$31.4 billion (\$440 billion in 2008 prices). In second place - the USSR - 11.3 (160 billion) dollars. France received 3.2 billion (about 45 billion), China - 1.6 (22) billion.

It was asserted abroad that victory over Germany was determined by Western weapons and that without Lend-Lease the Soviet Union would not have survived.

In Soviet historiography, it was usually stated that the amount of lend-lease assistance to the USSR was rather small - only about 4% of the funds spent by the country on the war, and tanks and aircraft were supplied mainly of obsolete models. Defending a different position is considered very unpatriotic.

But if lend-lease supplies were so unimportant, then why did Stalin attach such enormous importance to them? He turned to Churchill and Roosevelt many times in the most persistent way, literally extorting supplies.

On September 4, Stalin sent another message to Churchill, in which he wrote that if the Allies did not open a second front in the Balkans or in France and did not supply the USSR with 400 aircraft and 500 tanks every month, the USSR would not be able to help the Allies, otherwise and will soon be destroyed.

The Allies refused. Then Stalin asked to send 25-30 divisions to Arkhangelsk or transfer them through Iran. After all, soon you will have to hand over the central part

i See: Jopes V.N. Tse Voays jo Visa: Opcea be Gepa-G.ease (o {ÿe Souieÿ Otop, OKIAHOTA, 1969.

272

country and organize a new front across the Volga... And in general, the fate of Moscow hangs in the balance.

At the Soviet-Anglo-American conference in Moscow on September 29-October 1, 1941, Stalin directly stated the readiness of the USSR to fight depending on supplies. Let's get supplies or we'll lose the war! And then you will feel bad! Blackmail? Maybe... But apparently, not only blackmail. Both Zhukov and Mikoyan talked about the need for Lend-Lease!

Lend-Lease was literally extorted by the Soviet ambassador Ivan Maisky. He constantly demanded more help than Great Britain could physically provide, and he hinted unequivocally that in the event of a refusal in supplies, the USSR could well lose. W. Churchill once said:

"Remember that four months ago we on our island did not know if you would come out against us on the side of the Germans. Indeed, we considered it quite possible. But even then we were convinced of our ultimate victory. We have never considered our salvation to be in any way dependent on your actions. No matter what happens and no matter what you do, you have no right to reproach us.

If the USSR in July 1941 was the first to attack the Third Reich, it is unlikely that they would be supplied with anything. In such a virtuality, the Anglo-Saxons can take two positions:

- help the Third Reich;

take a position of complete neutrality.

In any case, the Anglo-Saxons will not help the USSR.

USSR AND BLITZKRIEG

Talking about the blitzkrieg as the main military doctrine of the Nazis, historians lose sight of: in basis

ÿ See: Zenkovich N. Ya. Marshals and General Secretaries. M., 1997. S. 161-162. 2 See: Ruge F. War at sea 1939-1945. M., 1957. S. 209.

273

Soviet doctrine lay exactly the same "blitzkrieg". "With little blood and on foreign territory" - isn't this a pure blitzkrieg? All plans known to us assume the conquest of Europe within literally 1-2 months of hostilities.

In reality, the USSR could not win a protracted war without the supplies of the Anglo-Saxons, that is, without the resources of the British Empire and the USA. And to put it even more cynically, without the resources of the Western Hemisphere and the British colonial empire. In our virtuality, the USSR, all the more, will not "pull" a protracted war.

The USSR can only count on a blitzkrieg: exactly like the Third Reich. The Third Reich was unable to carry out a blitzkrieg in the summer-autumn of 1941, before the onset of frost, and thus was doomed to defeat.

And the USSR has even less chance of a blitzkrieg than the Third Reich. The USSR is opposed neither by the army, which does not want to fight, nor by the population, which wants to stop the crazy communist experiments.

When attacking the Third Reich, there will be no blitzkrieg. There is no need to seriously talk about the "little blood" of the army-anthill, with a monstrously low level of training of the available staff. Even the brilliant victories of 1944-1945 in East Prussia and Germany, with the absolute superiority of the Red Army in artillery, tanks, aircraft, military equipment, cost hundreds of thousands of dead soldiers and officers.

The capture of East Prussia and the entry of the Red Army into German territory in the summer-autumn of 1941 will cost even more deaths: the Red Army will not have that experience.

For the USSR, a war on foreign territory is inevitably a protracted war. This war will be waged under incomparably worse military-diplomatic, political and economic conditions than in reality. The USSR has more resources than the Third Reich, it will "stretch out" the protracted war longer. But for him, such a war is doomed to defeat.

274

The degree of failure of this war depends on the political alignment. It may be more or less successful for Stalin's plans and in this sense more or less "good". It is physically impossible to consider all options, and it is not necessary. Consider two extreme cases: the alignment of the most "good" and the most "bad".

VIRTUALITY OF THE MOST "BAD" SCOOP

In this scenario, Hitler is smart, the Europeans are brave, the Comintern is ugly like a true child of Trotsky, and the Anglo-Saxons are efficient and cunning.

1) For the first time, hours, maximum days, of the war, Hitler gives states to the Poles and Ukrainians. He announces that the European civilization is at war with the Huns, Mongols, who attacked it... anyone. In a word, with the barbarians who attacked innocent Europe.

The Wehrmacht fights for everyone! But let everyone help him. The state of the Poles - to be. Recognition of the government in exile in London, an appeal to the Poles: we will give you broad autonomy, as in Austria-Hungary. We are already giving it! Let the Polish units in Polish uniforms, under the command of their officers, on the orders of their government, go into battle against the Bolshevik hordes.

Bandera and his people are released from prison. They apologize to them. They are told: you already have your own state. The Third Reich signs a peace treaty with you as a sovereign government. Just howl.

The form is yours. The officers are theirs. Planning of operations - together with the General Staff of the Third Reich.

This will immediately give hundreds of thousands, soon millions of bayonets and sabers. Of course, in order to make such decisions, Hitler from a revolutionary and a poseur must become a cunning, intelligent, realistic politician,

275

own to count three moves ahead. He must become Stalin! The option is practically impossible, but it must also be calculated as some kind of almost unbelievable extreme.

Even more incredible, but no less effective: to stop anti-Semitic politics. Even without abandoning the racial theory as such. The turn is approximately in the following spirit: among the Jews there are many descendants of the Aryans... There was a lot of confusion, the adoption of conversion back in the Middle Ages, a lot of marriages... Now this blood is showing! The slogan: a Jew who fights for the Reich is also an Aryan! Berlin and Frankfurt rabbis solemnly issue "blood certificates". The racial commission certifies that they are Nordic types.

This does not at all rule out reprisals against disloyal elements and all those who support the enemy. But the repressions are not racial, but political. Guilty is the one who works against his state, and not who was born with a different nose shape.

For the population of Germany, this marks a rallying in the face of the eastern enemy. Many new soldiers, most of them skilled and active. Soldiers who will prove their right to this new attitude towards them.

For the whole world - at least a long stun. An important weapon has been knocked out of the hands of the enemies of the Reich, they have lost an essential argument.

For the Jews of Eastern Europe, doubt about the inevitability of supporting any enemy of the Third Reich.

2) The Comintern did not raise a single most shattering revolution behind enemy lines. The European communists are few and weak. They are unable to bring confusion into the life of their countries, and even more so to actively help the USSR.

As a result:

- the peoples of Europe are united;

276

- the weakness of the communist idea becomes obvious to everyone;

- civil wars begin only where the Red Army comes. Which serves as another proof that in no case should it be allowed into its territory.

3) France, Spain, Italy, Hungary march together against the USSR. Even the small countries of Europe are putting up contingents of their troops. The number of allied troops is comparable to the number of the Wehrmacht.

4) The British are neutral at first. Then, when the Red Army advances deep into Poland, they and the Americans sign a truce with Hitler and begin to supply fuel and equipment.

And in this scenario, the Red Army has a chance to move west. The question is how far? Perhaps the Red Army will take Warsaw and Krakow. Crazy attacks of the Polish Home Army, whose hopeless chivalry makes the whole world talk about the heroism of "little Poland" and the brutality of the "Russians" who are crushing this country.

Perhaps it will be possible to capture the entire German Baltic: Memel, East Prussia, Danzig. This will confirm the whole world in the idea of the USSR as a terrible aggressor, which must be resisted at any cost.

The capture of East Prussia in our reality was accompanied by monstrous atrocities. In our virtuality, it can hardly be otherwise. Another argument for the Wehrmacht to fight to the last, and for the whole world to help the Wehrmacht, to act against the USSR.

The entry of the Red Army into the territory of Bulgaria and Serbia can happen relatively easily. Relatively little blood - with neutrality

277

local population. And the Wehrmacht will fight desperately here too. But the battles on the territory of Slovakia, Slovenia and Hungary will go on with both the Wehrmacht and the national armies. If these countries can be captured, then at the cost of long battles and huge losses.

Wherein:

- the USSR has no moral justification for aggression;

- the Red Army is advancing — the army of the World Revolution. For everyone, its movement is like the raid of the Red Army in 1920: "To Warsaw! To Berlin!"

Initially, Finland was not going to capture Leningrad. In our virtual reality, her readiness to participate in the storming of the city is real.

VIRTUALITY: PROBABLE RATES OF ADVENTURE

During the winter-spring campaign of 1944, the Red Army advanced 250-450 km in 4 months.

The brilliant Lublin-Brest operation (July 18 - August 2, 1944) was more successful: in 16 days - 260 km.

Another analogy. On August 30, 1944, the Slovak National Uprising began, in which many communists took part: against the pro-Nazi regime of the Slovak Republic, led by Josef Tiso. The Soviet leadership wanted to help the uprising. To do this, on September 8, 1944, Soviet troops launched the Carpatho-Dukela operation. But the troops advanced so slowly that in early November 1944, the Nazis crushed the uprising even before the Soviet troops could provide real help to it.

Only during the Vistula-Oder operation, which began on January 12, 1945, Soviet troops advanced up to 20 km per day for 20 days.

The question is - for what? First, as always, the dead were not counted: minefields were passed by penal battalions. Secondly, in the course of artillery preparation, up to three hundred guns stood per kilometer of the front. Distance

278

The distance from one gun to another was only three or four meters!.

In our virtuality, an uprising of the Slovaks would be unrealistic. And the Poles would actively fight with the Red Army.

After all, in reality, during the Lublin-Brest operation, the Red Army acted jointly with the Poles. The government in London set the Home Army the task of restoring statehood BEFORE the arrival of the Red Army. As the Wehrmacht retreated, the Craiova Army took possession of the liberated areas in Western Belarus, Western Ukraine, Lithuania, and Poland. The advancing Soviet troops already found a formed apparatus of power there, supported by armed detachments subordinate to the emigre government.

This was very convenient for the Red Army: it fought with the Wehrmacht, having an ally and conducting joint operations with him, and the rear units ended up on the territory of the union state. Later, the AK officers were arrested, and the fighters were disarmed and mobilized into the pro-Soviet Polish Army of General Berling. Naturally, not everyone went there. When trying to disarm the Akivtsy, they went into the forests. Capturing, the Akovites were accumulated in Nazi camps, including Majdanek, and from August 23, 1944, they were sent to camps in Russia.

But in reality, the Craiova Army was born underground. From November 1939, Zwienziek valki zbroinei (Union of Armed Struggle - ZVZ) gradually subdued the military conspiratorial organizations operating in Poland, which supported the government in London.

If the Nazis were arming the Home Army, it would

| See: Konev I.S. Forty-fifth. - M.: Military Publishing House, 1970.

2 See: Malinovsky M., Pavlovich E., Pomeransky V., Shpegonsky A., Vilyush M. Polish labor movement during the war and Nazi occupation. M., 1968. S. 45.

279

would have been more numerous and better armed. If such an army, together with the Wehrmacht, fought with the Red Army, the pace of the offensive would be much LOWER.

From the Soviet-Nazi border of July 1945 to Wroclaw-Breslau, Vienna, Prague and Bratislava, to Belgrade - approximately the same distance: about 400-500 km.

Such a path is 3-5 months of continuous offensive, that is, non-stop offensive battles. Moreover, communications are unreliable, no one gives or sells anything, the population is hostile, in the forests and mountains there are armed detachments of partisans.

If you do not engage in demagogy about the fact that "ours always won all the same," I don't see the slightest possibility of making this way ... But we are talking about only half the distance to the western regions of Germany.

RED ARMY AND VIRTUALITY

The war in reality turned out to be quite unexpected for the soldiers and officers of the Red Army. They were prepared for such a cheerful and victorious patriotic-class offensive, during which the proletarians from the enemy armies surrender, and the bourgeoisie will invariably be defeated.

But in reality, they could explain what was happening as a "treacherous attack" by the Nazis. Even in defeat there was a bitter but soul-stirring consideration: we did not prepare. We were suddenly attacked. We are slowly harnessing, but then we will go quickly.

The enemy was marching across the territory of Russia... This made the war morally justified, and it is no longer so important who was going to attack whom. We are right because we are victims of aggression. We need to expel the enemy from our territory, then we'll figure it out.

An offensive war in July 1941 would have been even more unexpected and, moreover,

was deprived of any

280

moral justification. That is, a justification can be found — the historical inevitability of the World Revolution. There was even a contingent of Arbat boys who were ready to die for the World Revolution. But were there many of them, the red-breasted children of the Arbat? Boys from Moscow families lured by the authorities, well-fed, in whose houses the place of icons was replaced by portraits of Marx, Lenin and Stalin? History has shown that Timurov Gaidarov and Pash Koganov are few. They disappeared by the winter of 1941 because it was not their war. They wanted war, but completely different.

If the Nazis lost the war, it was precisely because for millions of Russians of 120 nationalities they acted as OCCUPANTS. As enemies who must be beaten regardless of the political system of both the Fatherland and them, the invaders, the state. The Nazis were defeated because the division of the world by Stalin and Hitler turned into a Patriotic War for Russia.

In virtuality, the Red Army has been marching across a foreign land from the very beginning. For every sneeze of the Red Army, the Wehrmacht snarls with fire. Its soldiers do not surrender, no one is going to "beat the bourgeois" together with the Red Army. Some other people in completely unfamiliar uniforms are fighting next to the Wehrmacht soldiers. People in villages and towns leave with the enemy army or scatter. A foreign land blazes with fire, meets empty, silent, devastated. It is dangerous to enter the forest, whoever left the location of the unit did not return. The rest do not answer questions, try not to look into the eyes.

Of course, under the conditions of an offensive war, you cannot run away into the woods and rush from the enemy to the east. But as soon as the front stabilizes ...

In reality, 5.7 million soldiers and officers of the Red Army surrendered during the war years. Of these, more than a million fought in the Wehrmacht, and more than one and a half collaborated with the Nazis.

million.

Among the prisoners - 79 generals. 13 generals killed by the Nazis for refusing to cooperate, 4 generals fled,

281

returning to the Red Army or joining the partisans.

But 23 other generals of the Red Army after the victory of the USSR were shot or hanged, and 10 received decent terms. For cooperation with adversaries - KOM.

In virtuality, the same Red Army men and the same generals go to the west. Why would they behave differently?

VIRTUALITY OF "RUSSIAN POLITICS"

In reality, the Wehrmacht created Russian national units more than once and willingly included defectors in its composition. And the political leadership of the Reich in every possible way prevented this. We are considering the virtuality of the "smart Hitler", and therefore we simply have to assume: on July 25, the government of the Russian Republic is being created in Krakow. Well, well, let it be the Russian National Socialist Republic. Government is being created | August 1941 and temporarily located in Krakow. Soon he will have to move to Wroclaw.

This creation of an alternative "government" would mean exactly one thing: Stalin was fed his own porridge. Communists regularly created "alternative governments" of the states they were at war with. Depending on the alignment, these governments were either forgotten like a bad dream or turned into the government of a satellite country.

The first case is the Terijoki government, created | December 1939. The "People's Government" was created in the village of Terijoki (now Zelenogorsk), north of St. Petersburg. The "government" was "headed" by an old member of the Comintern, the Bolshevik Otto Kuusinen. After the defeat of the USSR in the Winter War, the government was simply forgotten.

Second case: On July 21, 1944, the Polish Communists and their allies set up the Polish Committee of National Liberation in Chełm

282

new pro-Soviet government of Poland. Poland had a legitimate government, the Polish government in exile.

Nevertheless, in the Sovietization of Poland, it was the "Chelm government" that played a large and sinister role and became the basis of the future government of the Polish "People's" Republic.

And so, the government of the Russian National Socialist Republic arises. |

Leaflets over the positions of the Red Army. Leaflets can be collected, prevented from being read, shot for possession. But at night, near the location of the Red Army units, they shout the same thing in good Russian: "You are dying for the International! You are tools in the hands of the commissars!"

Even in official writings such as Zhukov's "Memories and Reflections," there are references to the fact that before the war, the orders of the People's Commissar of Defense S.K. Timoshenko from Moscow was sabotaged in a number of military districts. This sabotage took place especially openly in Byelorussia, in the ZapOVO, where General of the Army D. Pavlov commanded.

As early as July 1941, the entire leadership of the Western Front, including Pavlov, the commander of the front, was shot for "cowardice, lack of initiative and alarmism, which created the possibility of the enemy breaking through the front"...

Only the deputy chief of the front, Boldin, escaped: when the chief and colleagues were shot, he was surrounded. And he left already in August 1941. By that time, the cadre army had almost completely died, and the survivors were not shot. Boldin was promoted in rank and given command of the 50th Army. He survived the war and even wrote memoirs. About how "troops you

1 Materials of the investigation and trial of General D.G. Pavlov // Unknown Russia. Collection of documents. Book. 2. M., 1992.

283

were forced to retreat and dispersed in scattered groups through the forests!

In our virtuality, there is nothing to shoot Pavlov for, he honestly conquers Europe. But does he want to fight more than the same Pavlov in reality?

On September 15, a white rag appears above the parapet of the trench. Silence. Between the lines of the trenches, the Red Army truce is moving. General Pavlov and his staff go over to the side of the Nazis. And is he alone? In reality, there were 23 collaborating generals, and 5.7 million soldiers and officers who surrendered. This is already more than enough to create the Russian Liberation Army. In our reality, the ROA was created only in 1944. In this virtuality, it is created in September 1941. The huge ROA not only splits the front, it forces units loyal to Stalin to roll back. It will create an ambiguous situation: there are two armies, two governments in Russia.

Of course, the Anglo-Saxons will not support the National Socialist Republic of Russia. And the Republic of Russia? What if the diplomats of this Republic come to London on October 1, 1941? There are amazing possibilities here...

THE VIRTUALITY OF THE RED ARMY'S RETREAT

When will the invasion of Europe by 120 languages finally stop? Where? Will it happen near Krakow, on October 1, 1941, after two months of the war? Near Warsaw, in the third month of the war, November 1, 1941? Or will the Red Army stand up and be unable to move on only on the banks of the Danube, drenched in human blood, littered with fragments of the living and the dead, on October 15? Will the Red Army reach Breslau and stand only on its outskirts on December 15, 1941?

In any case, the moment is inevitable when she gets up

! Boldin I.V. pages of life. M., 1961. 284

No. Someone else will rush forward, rape tank engines, stubbornly walk, run, crawl, run across towards the purple-smoky flashes of shots, point artillery barrels at the houses of Polish peasants that have not yet flared up. But the army stood up. Having lost millions of soldiers, having completely lost the understanding of the meaning of its actions, the Red Army will stand up and will no longer be able to.

Just as the Nazis failed at Stalingrad, so the Communists will not be able to near Warsaw. Near Stalingrad, the Red Army fed the Wehrmacht with its own porridge: it took 22 divisions into the "cauldron": as the Nazis took the Soviet armies into the "boilers" more than once or twice.

Virtually, on October 15, a ring closed near Warsaw. There are no frosts, although it is already cool for soldiers dressed in summer. But the main thing is that the "cauldron" is very hungry. And hopeless. I didn't want to fight before, now I've lost my desire completely. By October 20, the surrounded soldiers, having killed the commissars and officers who did not want to give up, fled in droves to the Nazi trenches, raising their hands. They will be driven through the streets of Berlin, demonstrating to the whole world.

From October 16, the Red Army will roll back in the south and in the center. Only near Danzig did it catch on and stand still. From this day on, the only question is when the front, which is rolling back to the east, will reach Moscow. And when the Finns move to St. Petersburg.

THE PROBLEM OF THE WINTER CAMPAIGN

Winter campaign problem? Yes, in reality, the government of the Third Reich did not order to prepare for the winter campaign. Then the generals of the Reich in their memoirs will describe the terrible "General Frost", who defeated them. Of course, he won if no one was preparing to fight with him. If neither winter lubricant, nor winter uniforms, nor warm shoes and underwear are prepared. If it is officially said that the blitzkrieg should end by September.

285

In our virtuality, Hitler and his entourage are smart and perceptive. For the winter campaign they
ready.

Among the fairy tales about Europe, Russia is very fond of this one: that Europeans are very afraid of frost. In fact, due to the high humidity in Europe, even "weak" frosts, according to Russian concepts, are much more difficult to endure. The drier, the higher the frost tolerance. Minus 5 in Berlin feels like minus 25 in Moscow and minus 35 in Novosibirsk.

At least for the inhabitants of Northern Europe, "Russian frosts" up to 25-30 degrees are quite comfortable. To the same extent as minus 5-10 at home.

INEVITABLE DESTRUCTION

The invasion of the USSR by enemies in the fall of 1941 or in the spring of 1942 in virtuality is much worse than what happened in reality:

- an army is marching on the USSR, much more formidable than it was in reality in 1941.

- it really is a "team of Europe": in reality, and not in the inflamed imagination of "patriots" from the semi-official party;

- the war easily becomes civil for the peoples of the USSR, including the Russian people.

If the front, stretching from the Baltic to the Danube, collapses, the future may proceed at the pace of the Civil War: that is, the speed of the Wehrmacht may become 30-40 km per day. Even more, if you go by railroads, throwing military commands in the settlements.

When will the Wehrmacht and its allies enter Moscow? Will it happen on November 9, 1941? Or May 1, 1942? To be honest, I don't see a fundamental difference.

If the Nazis are very smart and created the Russian Republic and the Russian Liberation Army, there is no need to storm Moscow. When the Wehrmacht approaches Mo

286

the new Red Army, formed in the Urals and Siberia, will do the same as its predecessor did in June-September 1941: partly scatter, partly surrender.

THE DEFEAT OF THE USSR... FOR LONG TIME?

There is also a question of a smart and stupid occupier. But I see no particular need to consider different perspectives of occupation. This is the subject of a separate article.

I will say briefly: WITHOUT a Russian national state, the occupation lasts exactly as long as it takes to start a large-scale people's WAR.

If there is a Russian national state, a Russian republic, then the results of the war can become final. After some time, the occupiers can withdraw their troops, Russia has forever ceased to be a hotbed of the World Revolution.

VIRTUALITY: THE BEST PACKAGE

But consider the opposite!

In this version, everything is very good for Stalin: Hitler is especially stupid, the Europeans are especially cowardly, the Comintern is surprisingly effective, the local communists are brave, the British and Americans are exceptionally short-sighted.

1) Hitler does not give anything to the allies, he insists on the holiness and inviolability of racial theory. He does not give them weapons, powers, or equipment to pursue an independent policy. That is, it actually prevents Ukrainians and Poles from fighting the USSR, because they are racially unclean.

2) Europeans are splitting within themselves, they are in a civil war.

In Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, France, the countries of Northern Europe, the communists come to the surface with the first volleys of the invasion. As a result:

287

- in the countries where hostilities are taking place, the Red Army receives a powerful and active ally, numerous local agents;

— the governments of countries separated from the theater of operations by the territory of the Third Reich are paralyzed by these internal unrest and cannot actively help the Third Reich, even if they want it.

The exceptions are Spain, where the communists and anarchists in 1939 were suppressed firmly and for a long time. And Italy, where the social program of the communists is successfully carried out by Mussolini.

3) Europeans do not want and are afraid to fight on the side of Hitler.

For Denmark, the Netherlands, France, Belgium, the Czech Republic, there comes a moment of weakening of the enemy that conquered them. They try not to support Hitler, slow down deliveries to the Wehrmacht, do not send their units or violate the terms of their speeches, and prevent the recruitment of volunteers.

The allies of the Third Reich, Italy and Spain, are not sure of his victory. They are waiting. As the Red Army advances, they become more and more convinced of the correctness of their policy.

4) The British and Americans are neutral.

Let's not even consider the option of Anglo-American assistance to the USSR. Anglo-Saxons are neutral. They wait, watching how the USSR smashes yesterday's ally.

The speech in the Senate by Democratic Senator Harry Truman (since 1944 Vice President of the United States, from April 1945 to January 1953 - President of the United States) is widely known: "If we see that Germany is winning, then we should help Russia, and if If Russia wins, then we should help Germany, and thus let them kill as many as possible, although I do not want under any circumstances to see Hitler as the winner!

Suppose the Anglo-Saxons do not act as commanded

! Me\m Yorgk Titez. 06/24/41. 288

gave them the great Truman. They do not help the losing Hitler. They are waiting. It is most likely that they open a second front at the last moment.

Then by the winter or, at most, by the spring of 1942, the Red Army will occupy both Eastern Europe and the Third Reich. Berlin is renamed Stalingrad. Hitler and his entourage partly manage to escape to South America, part of Hitler's top bosses die.

It is also possible that some of the leadership of the Third Reich will go over to the side of the Reds. Indeed, in 1945-1953, Buchenwald continued to work, and many workers of the Third Reich from his guards continued to work in their former places. There were many people in the Stasi in the GDR who worked in the SS and the Gestapo.

So, on October 15, 1941, the Polish People's Republic was founded. Her army is fighting the Nazis. Romania, Hungary, Bulgaria, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic have similar "people's" governments.

On December 15, 1941 or May 1, 1942, Berlin capitulated. German communists and those who joined them recall the revolutions of 1918-1919 and 1923 and the Rot Front. skinny,

but the living Ernst Thälmann puts those who had just kept him there in Majdanek. Goebbels hysterically shouts over the radio about the abyss into which he has led the superior race... that is, in the sense of the proletarians of Germany, the accursed regime of Hitler-Bormann.

You can rename Berlin to Stalinstadt, Munich to Zhukovheim, Hamburg to Leningretz, and Dresden to Marksdorf. Complete communist idyll.

But even this does not at all mean the conquest, let alone the world ... It does not even mean the conquest of Europe.

A Soviet empire is emerging on an expanded scale, which includes all or almost all of Germany. Not in 1945, but in 1942. And it's all.

The rest of Europe is not conquered. To the west of Croatia and to the south of Germany lie France, Italy and Spain. They also have to be conquered.

There are two options, directly dependent on what and how

10 A. Isaev 289

will do the Anglo-Saxons. If they are neutral, then the USSR will face a new terrible war. Let us imagine this war as a direct continuation of the war with the Third Reich. So, in the spring of 1942, units of the Red Army and the armies of the new states of Eastern Europe, including the German Red Army, crossed the Rhine and launched an offensive in the Ardennes. At the same time, other units of the Red Army are moving into Northern Italy. New protracted war.

For example, in the fall of 1942, the advanced units of the Red Army, advancing in Portugal, saw the swells of the Atlantic Ocean in front of them. Others still toiled with their stomachs in the summer, eating oranges and grapes of southern Italy.

But this is not the conquest of the world. This is not even the conquest of Europe, because there is still Scandinavia, and there is still Britain, still invulnerable on its islands.

This is the first option if the Anglo-Saxons do not intervene. As they sat on the sidelines, so they sit.

The second option is that the Anglo-Saxons come into motion BEFORE the USSR conquers everything.

ANGLO-SAXONS AS NON-ALLIES

There is a historical legend according to which Harry Truman explained to his son: the peoples of Europe are the players on the battlefield. And we are substitute players, we will go to the field when the rest are tired. Cynically? Yes, it seems that Stalin also said something like that ...

The question is exactly when and in what form the Anglo-Saxons will play their historical role.

Option one: they open the Second Front BEFORE the defeat of the Third Reich. Suppose they were too late to divide the defeated Germany. On November 9, 1941 or May 1, 1942, British-American and Soviet soldiers meet on the Rhine. But they meet not as in our reality: not as comrades-in-arms! Through the Rhine

290

they look, it's good if they don't exchange fire, they are not allies ... It's good if they aren't enemies yet.

In this case, it is not very clear whether a new round of World War II will take place: the conquest of Western and Southern Europe. Because the USSR is clearly not ready to fight with the Anglo-Saxons. Basically. This detail is somehow not considered by our brave "patriots", but in vain ...

In this scenario, the conquest of ALL of Europe will not take place. The USSR can, if it wants to, be replenished with the Greek SSR, the Polish SSR, the Hungarian SSR, the Slovak SSR, the Czech SSR and other SSRs. It can dismember Germany and adorn itself with the High German SSR, the Rhine SSR, the Bavarian SSR, the Saxon SSR, the Palatinate SSR.

What will change if the Anglo-Saxons intervene later? In the sense - if they do not prevent Stalin from conquering Europe at all? Then, firstly, several million more people will die. Secondly, then the USSR will be replenished with the Catalan SSR, the Sicilian SSR, the Picardy SSR and the Breton SSR. Let's say that the USSR will have not 30, but 50 "Soviet socialist republics". Suppose the borders of the USSR will stretch from the Pacific Ocean to the Atlantic ... So what?

DELICATE QUESTION

A delicate question that our unfortunate "patriots" never ask: the question of why the USSR behaved so modestly after the Second World War. I dare to remind you: because only the USA had atomic weapons. There are several examples ... I will give only one. Stalin tried to chop off all of Azerbaijan from Iran. Not even to conquer Iran, but more modestly - to wrest from Iran about a third of the territory and population. No persuasion worked, of course.

Only the United States, which at that time had a monopoly on atomic weapons, could stop the Soviet Union. In March 1946, as the Azerbaijani crisis reached its peak, President Truman threatened to

291

atomic weapons against the USSR if Stalin does not withdraw the occupying troops. And it worked: led.

In our reality, they managed to steal the atomic secret through the hands of the Rosenberg spouses. The last action of the unforgettable Comintern times was a success because a part of American Jews still had a sentimental attitude towards the USSR as a former homeland and as a conqueror of the terrible enemy of Jewry — Hitler.

In our virtuality, the aggressor is the USSR, it does not have the glory of a savior. And it is unlikely that the theft of the atomic secret will take place.

In our reality, the Anglo-Saxons allowed the creation of the Soviet empire... but of a strictly defined size. In our reality, they considered it necessary not to let their dear ally Stalin into most of the territory of Germany, and even more so into Western Europe. And even if they let you in?

Of course, the world map would have looked different... On this world map there would have been a huge Soviet empire, but also of a strictly defined size. This size would have been openly or tacitly, but agreed upon, and Stalin would have observed these agreements, he would not have gone anywhere.

No one would have allowed him to conquer the British Empire and its satellites.

CONSEQUENCES OF "GOOD VIRTUALITY" FOR THE USSR AND THE USA

..In fact, they are only bad for the USSR. Throughout the history of the USSR, various countries of Europe and the USA were a source of high technologies for it. The USSR could play on the contradictions of opponents. If Europe has become a part of the USSR, the same thing happens to it that happened to Russia itself, and then to the countries of "people's democracy": it ceases to be a source of high technologies. In reality, the United States greatly benefited from the fact that in the late 1940s Europe was

292

sorry in ruins. In our virtuality, things are even better for the USA. They are turning into the ONLY complex industrial production center on Earth.

And the USSR is forced to deal with the United States as the only ruler of the Earth, the monopoly on atomic weapons, the only buyer of raw materials mined in the USSR. And besides, his "fifth column" in the United States itself is much weaker than in reality.

For Britain, the conquest of the continent is also not bad at all: if several "Soviet republics" appeared in the place of France, its colonies would easily be "taken over" by the British. How long? Let them figure it out themselves.

STALIN AS HITLER

When discussing the prospects of the "Zemshar Republic of Soviets", our theoreticians and analysts show, firstly, fabulous ignorance. They simply do not realize how vast and complex the world is.

Secondly, they turn out to be incapable of the most elementary action, which seems to be obligatory for an analyst. They do not calculate events beyond one first move. However, they have this in common with Stalin.

We are still supposed to consider Stalin a "great statesman" and almost a genius. So Suvorov thinks... Although he himself writes how Stalin miscalculated, how he made a mistake in all the calculations.

Indeed: he was preparing to create something Zemsharnoye, even the Palace of Soviets was going to be built with 100 floors. To do this, he shared the world with Hitler, but did not get what he expected. The "icebreaker of the revolution" failed to fulfill its "historical mission" and even attacked Stalin himself.

He again began to divide the world, this time with the rulers of the "decaying bourgeois pseudo-democracies", and in the same way - with the help of secret collusion.

But what is most interesting is that twice finding allies, Twice starting to share the world with them, in both cases Stalin was deceived in his plans and forecasts. Veli

293

which statesman? But each time he managed to make incredible efforts and get unjustifiably little for them. Including, it seems, because he did not understand the psychology of his allies at all, did not see what was really a priority for them, what they were ready to fight for in earnest.

In our reality, Stalin was not able even in Europe to play the role of a "reserve player" who came to the battlefield last. Hitler was ahead of him at the last moment. But in our reality, not Stalin, but the Anglo-Saxons entered the field last. They did it! The Anglo-Saxons played the same game with Stalin that he played with Hitler.

Stalin and Hitler together turned out to be "icebreakers of the US hegemony". They smashed Europe to pieces, and then the "valiant allies" came and took everything into their own hands.

In "good" virtuality, only one thing changes: Stalin becomes the only "icebreaker of US domination." He plays the same role in history that he himself prepared for Hitler.

Moreover, in many respects, Stalin's post-war empire is noticeably WORSE than the one that arose in reality.

PERSPECTIVE OF THE USSR FROM OCEAN TO OCEAN

Judge for yourself...

Firstly, in conquering this "USSR from the Pacific to the Atlantic", the Russian people and other peoples of the "first USSR" will overstrain even more than they have overstrained in our reality.

Secondly, in the conquered Europe, many pockets of resistance immediately appear: Lithuania, Poland, Western Ukraine, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Greece ... And what is being done in Spain with its Guerrilla tradition, it is simply hard for me to imagine.

The empire will never be reconciled. She never

294

will be peaceful and calm. And how much blood will be shed, one can only guess.

Thirdly, Soviet domination means the collapse of precisely those complex branches of the economy that made Europe the mistress of the world. No import of food and raw materials from the colonies? This means that infrastructure is being simplified, and the percentage of the population employed in agriculture and forestry is growing.

Fourth, complete dependence on the United States, which has already been mentioned.

All in all, a terrible prospect.

There is much more to say, but that's another topic.

The attack of the USSR on the Third Reich is fraught with much worse consequences, even in the event of a quick victory over the Reich. In reality, the best version of history took place.

Valentin Runov

"PREVENTIVE" STRIKE OF THE RED ARMY IN THE SUMMER OF 1941

history does not recognize subjunctive moods and

a phrase like "what would happen if ..." does not have any

what does it have to do with historical science. It is also said that after decades it is easy to criticize and see other people's mistakes. At the same time, specific scientific knowledge gives us the right to reason, analyze, and predict.

For many years, the question has been topical, was the Soviet Union preparing an attack on Germany in 1941? Soviet authors did not even consider this issue. In the post-Soviet period, opinions were divided. Suvorov (Rezun) gives a positive answer to this question. Other authors evade a direct answer. A prominent researcher of the initial period of the war in the Western strategic direction, a leading researcher of the Institute of Military History of the Armed Forces of Russia V.V. Abaturov writes that in the "Strategic development of the operational department of the Wehrmacht high command for the preparation and conduct of a campaign against the USSR" dated September 15, 1940, the German military-political leadership predicted three options for possible actions of the Red Army at the beginning of the war. Among the first considered was the option of the Soviet Union inflicting a preemptive strike on the deploying German troops. But, according to the developers of the plan, this option was no longer possible due to the inability of the command and troops of the Red Army to deliver a powerful blow to East Prussia and Northern Poland. (Abaturov V.V. In the Western direction. M., 2007. P. 30).

296

But to what extent the Soviet side planned to attack Germany first, no one has a fully reasoned answer. Therefore, I will not be categorical in answering this question, but I want to offer the reader some documents, operational-tactical

calculations and own reasoning made on this basis. After that, everyone will be able to take into account the facts they like and draw their own conclusions.

In 1995, under the auspices of the Federal Counterintelligence Service of the Russian Federation, the Academy of the Federal Counterintelligence Service published a multi-volume work "State Security Organs of the USSR in the Great Patriotic War", presented as a collection of documents. The first volume of this work, which offers documents for the period November 1938 - December 1940, contains (document No. 94) a memorandum of the 1st Directorate of the GUPV of the NKVD of the USSR No. June 28, 1940. In the following months, such information periodically came from various sources and was immediately reported to the Soviet military-political leadership.

On January 12, 1941, reconnaissance report No. 2 of the border troops department of the NKVD of the Ukrainian SSR reported that on December 9, the area of the city of Sanok was visited by the commander-in-chief of the German land army, Field Marshal Walter von Brauchitsch, who reviewed the troops and fortifications in the area. The same report reported on the arrival of new German units in the border zone, the construction of barracks for personnel there, concrete firing points, loading and unloading areas on the railway and airfields. (Government security agencies of the USSR in the Great Patriotic War: Collection of documents. Vol. 1. On the eve. Book 2. M., 1995. P. 5-7.)

This was followed by frequent cases of violations by the German side of the state border of the USSR. So, the head of the border troops of the NKVD of the BSSR on January 24

297

in 1941, in his report, he also reported on the deployment of an army headquarters in Warsaw, and on the territory of the border counties - an army corps headquarters, eight headquarters of infantry and one cavalry divisions, 28 infantry, seven artillery, three cavalry and one tank regiments, two aviation schools.

It was reported below: "From the moment the Convention was concluded until January 1, 1941, a total of 187 various conflicts and incidents arose on the border with Germany ... During the reporting period, 87 cases of border violations by German aircraft were recorded ... Three German aircraft after flying across the border were landed... which were subsequently released to Germany.

One German aircraft was shot down on March 17, 1940 at the site of the 10th outpost of the Augustow border detachment as a result of the use of weapons. (Government security agencies of the USSR in the Great Patriotic War: Collection of documents. Vol. 1. On the eve. Book 2. M., 1995. S. 20-21).

Consequently, the People's Commissariat of Defense of the USSR and the General Staff of the Red Army knew about Germany's aggressive plans against the USSR and had to respond to them accordingly, that is, prepare either for defense or for inflicting a preemptive strike on the enemy.

To sum up the results of 1940, at the end of December, a meeting of the highest command and political staff of the Red Army was held in Moscow. It was attended by the leadership of the People's Commissariat of Defense and the General Staff, heads of central departments, commander, members of military councils and chiefs of staff of military districts, armies, heads of military academies, inspector generals of military branches, commanders of some corps, divisions - more than 270 people in total.

The main speaker on the topic "The nature of a modern offensive operation" was the commander of the troops of the Kyiv Special Military District G.K. Zhukov. At the beginning of his report, G.K. Zhukov under

298

outlined the importance of the offensive as a type of military action by troops and pointed out the factors on which its success depends. He stood up for conducting an offensive with decisive goals and explained the failures of the Spanish leadership in the civil war precisely from the reasons for his inability to conduct an offensive.

Then he dwelled on the nature of the hostilities in the military conflict on the Khalkhin Gol River. He stated: "The general offensive operation ... is a modern operation, quite instructive both from the point of view of its organization, material support, and from the point of view." Then he described this operation in sufficient depth and comprehensively.

Paying great attention to the issue of achieving surprise, G.K. Zhukov noted that the efforts of the Soviet command "were reduced to giving the enemy the impression that we were not preparing to attack, but were preparing to defend."

Speaking about the offensive operations of the Soviet-Finnish war, he noted that the first of them were thwarted due to "completely unsatisfactory preparation." |

Then Georgy Konstantinovich switched to offensive operations of the outbreak of the Second World War. He criticized the Poles for their inability to conduct not only offensive but also defensive operations and noted the high military skill of the German command. "Who played the main role in carrying out this strategic operation? Georgy Konstantinovich asked and answered himself: "As you can see, the main role is played by aviation and motorized armored formations, which, with their deep and swift blows, terrorized, in fact, the entire Polish army, government and the whole country."

Further, he pointed out that the conduct of the offensive operation by the German troops "was preceded by the advance development of a powerful network of espionage agents and sabotage groups." He emphasized the ability of the Germans to achieve continuity of operations.

299

Having thus characterized the offensive operations that had already taken place, Georgy Konstantinovich turned to the main question - the development of views on the conduct of such an operation in the future. He noted that the front should advance in a zone of 400-450 kilometers to a depth of 200-300 kilometers at a rate of 25-30 kilometers per day. He pointed to the increasing role of delivering the main blow on a narrow sector of the front and maneuvering to the flank and rear of the defending troops. (Russian archive. Vol. 12(1), pp. 129-151.)

In the debate on the report of G.K. Zhukov was made by the chief of staff of the Baltic Special Military District, Lieutenant-General P.S. Klenov. He criticized Isserson's book "New Forms of Struggle", in which the author argued that there would be no initial period of modern warfare, based on Germany's aggression against Poland, that the war would begin with the invasion of an already deployed grouping. "I consider such a conclusion to be premature," summed up P.S. Klenov. "It can be allowed for a state like Poland, which, having become arrogant, has lost all vigilance and which had no intelligence of what the Germans were doing during the months-long concentration of troops." (Russian archive. T. 12(1). S. 153.)

Then, in the development of the report by G.K. Zhukov, the commander of the 1st mechanized corps of the Leningrad Military District, Lieutenant General P.L. Romanenko, commander of the troops of the Far Eastern Front, Colonel-General G.M. Stern, Deputy Chief of the General Staff of the Red Army - Head of the Intelligence Directorate, Lieutenant General F.I. Golikov, Chief of Staff of the Far Eastern Front, Major General M.A. Kuznetsov, commander of the troops of the Oryol Military District, Lieutenant General F.N. Remizov, Head of the Main Directorate of the Air Force of the Red Army Lieutenant General P.V. Rychagov, head of the Main Directorate of Air Defense of the Red Army, Lieutenant General D.T. Kozlov and many others.

Shortly after this presentation, a famous

300

operational-strategic card game, during which G.K. Zhukov outplayed General D.G. Pavlov, and a few days later, Georgy Konstantinovich was appointed to the post of Chief of the General Staff instead of the cautious and judicious General K.A. Meretskov. One can only guess about the true reasons for this appointment, but the fact that G.K. Zhukov at that time was considered a major offensive specialist, there is no doubt about it. True, about his work in this direction in the last pre-war months in his memoirs, he

does not write anything.

Nevertheless, historians are well aware of such a document as "Considerations on the Plan for the Strategic Deployment of the Armed Forces of the Soviet Union" dated May 15, 1941. It says, in part: "Considering that Germany currently keeps her army mobilized, with deployed rears, she has the opportunity to warn us in the deployment and deliver a surprise strike. In order to prevent this, I consider it necessary in no case to give the initiative to the German command, to pre-empt the enemy in deployment and attack the German army at a time when it will be in the deployment stage and will not have time to organize a front and interaction troops.

The first strategic goal of the actions of the Red Army is to defeat the main forces of the German army deployed south of Brest-Demblin, and to reach north of the line of Ostrolenka, the river, by the 30th day. Narew, Lovich, Lodz, Kreuzburg, Oppeln, Olomouc.

The subsequent strategic goal is to advance from the Katowice region in a northern or northwestern direction, to defeat the large enemy forces of the center and northern wing of the German front, and to capture the territory of former Poland and East Prussia.

The immediate task is to defeat the German army east of the river. Vistula and in the Krakow direction to reach the line of the river. Narew, Vistula and capture the Katowice area, for which:

301

a) deliver the main blow by the forces of the Southwestern Front in the direction of Krakow, Katowice, cut off Germany from its southern allies;

b) deliver an auxiliary strike by the left wing of the Western Front in the direction of Warsaw, Demblin in order to pin down the Warsaw grouping and capture Warsaw, as well as assist the Southwestern Front in defeating the Lublin grouping.

This document was published in the Military Historical Journal No. 2, 1992. At the same time, its author, a major military historian V.N. Kiselev, indicates that the document was written by A.M. Vasilevsky, but not signed by G.K. Zhukov, nor S.K. Timoshenko and, moreover, not approved by I.V. Stalin. Any sane person understands that without these signatures he had no force and can only be considered as proposals for one of the options for action.

At the same time, it must be taken into account that by the end of May 1941, in each western district, defense plans were developed for the period of mobilization, concentration and deployment of troops, which were first published in the Military Historical Journal No. 2,3,4 ibv 1996. In these plans, tasks were set to cover the state border of each army and each formation of the reserve, tasks were determined for the air forces of the district, issues of operational equipment for the theater of military operations, organization of the rear, issues of control, and much more were considered. Based on the district plans, army plans were developed, which determined the tasks and order of operations of the troops up to the rifle battalion. The development and availability of these operational documents best of all confirm the true intentions of the Soviet leadership for 1941.

The complete opposite of the Soviet side in the first half of 1941 was the work of the top leadership of the German Armed Forces. To verify this, it is enough to take

hands War diary of the Chief of the General Staff of the Ground Forces Germ

302

Research Institute of Colonel-General F. Halder. With purely German punctuality, he describes the work in preparation for aggression not only of the General Staff, but also of all structures subordinate to it. (Halder F. Military diary. Vol. 2, 3. M., 1971.)

At the same time, the presence of the "Considerations" dated May 15, 1941 allows many to speculate about what would happen if the Soviet Union were the first to strike at the Wehrmacht troops concentrated near its borders and went on a decisive offensive against selected boards.

At that time, the Soviet military theory developed and tested in practice during the exercises a deep offensive operation. According to this theory, the army, having in its composition two rifle corps, one mechanized corps and one or two aviation divisions, was able, advancing in a zone of 50-80 kilometers, to break through the prepared enemy defenses in a section of 20-30 kilometers. Infantry formations and, having introduced a mechanized corps into battle (two tank and one mechanized division, a total of 1031 tanks in the state), could advance to a depth of 100 kilometers in 7-10 days. (War and military affairs. M., 1933. S. 554-556; Varfolomeev N. Shock army. - M., 1932. S. 176-185.)

To build up efforts, the front commander had several more mechanized corps and rifle divisions at his disposal.

Now let's move from theory to facts. By June 1941, the configuration of the Soviet-German border created two protrusions in the western direction, one in the area of Bialystok (Western Special Military District), the second in the area of Lvov (Kiev Special Military District). The 3rd and 10th armies were in the Bialystok ledge, and the 6th and 26th armies were in the Lvov ledge. The 3rd and 10th armies included 7 rifle, 2 cavalry, 6 tank, 2 motorized divisions, which included more than 170 thousand personnel, almost 1000 tanks, over 2 thousand guns and mortars, about

303

300 aircraft. The 6th and 26th armies included six rifle, 1 cavalry, 4 tank, two mechanized divisions, which included more than 200 thousand personnel, 2232 tanks, about 2500 guns and mortars, over 500 aircraft.

You also need to take into account that between the Bialystok and Lvov groups were the 4th and 5th armies of a fairly powerful composition. The 4th Army included the 14th Mechanized Corps, and the 5th Army included the 22nd Mechanized Corps, whose tank formations, if necessary, could be quickly transferred to the offensive zones of the shock armies. In addition, the commander of the Western Special Military District still had the 7th, 13th, 17th, 20th, 23rd and 25th mechanized corps in reserve, and the commander of the Kiev Special Military District had the 9th th, 15th, 16th, 19th and 24th mechanized corps. Taking into account these forces and assets, the Western Special Military District had 2,900 tanks, 14,249 guns and mortars, and 1,785 combat aircraft. The Kiev Special Military District has 5,465 tanks, 14,756 guns and mortars, and 2,059 combat aircraft.

In military affairs, it is customary to calculate the density of forces and means in the entire offensive zone and in the direction of the main attack. If we assume that in the event of the outbreak of war by the USSR, each shock army will advance in a zone of 80 kilometers, then the density of forces and means in the zone of the 3rd and 10th armies of the Western Special Military District, taking into account the use of front-line reserves, could be less than 20 kilometers per rifle (cavalry) division, and for every kilometer of the offensive front up to 14 tanks, up to 100 guns and mortars, up to 13 combat aircraft. In the zone of operations of the strike group of the Kyiv Special Military District, a rifle (cavalry) division could advance on the front up to 15 kilometers, and at each kilometer

up to 34 tanks, about 95 guns and mortars, 13 combat aircraft could operate. But in connection with the demand for a decisive massing of forces and means on the

304

during the main shocks, these densities could be much higher.

Now let's evaluate the enemy. The troops of the 9th field army and the 3rd tank group from the Army Group Center were located against the Bialystok salient. Opposite the Lvov ledge were the 17th field army and the 1st tank group from the Army Group South. The field armies consisted exclusively of infantry divisions, which did not have a single tank, but had 212 guns and mortars, 75 anti-tank guns and 96 anti-tank rifles. The 3rd tank group (commanded by General G. Goth) consisted of four tank and three mechanized divisions. The 1st tank group (commanded by General E. Kleist) consisted of five tank and three mechanized divisions. In 1941, the Wehrmacht tank division consisted of two motorized, artillery and one tank regiment. This regiment had 209 tanks. The motorized division also did not have a single tank. Consequently, the enemy had 827 tanks against the Bialystok salient, and a little over one thousand against the Lvov salient.

Somewhat south of the Bialystok ledge, there was the 2nd tank group (commanded by General G. Guderian), which included five tank and four mechanized divisions. If we assume that, if necessary, this group could be withdrawn to the reserve of the High Command and transferred to the directions of the main attacks of the enemy, then this is another 1045 tanks. The 2nd tank group in full strength could have been 1:1.5 in favor of the Soviet troops, against Lvovsky - 1:5.4 in favor of the Soviet troops.

Now for aviation. In the zone of Army Group Center, the enemy had 1,677 combat aircraft, including 530 fighters and 980 bombers. The troops of the Western Special Military District had 1,150 combat aircraft, including 408 bombers.

305

The Germans had 2,010 aircraft in the zone of Army Group South, while the troops of the Kyiv Special Military District had approximately the same number of aircraft, of which 466 were bombers. Some superiority, it would seem, is on the side of the enemy. But in the event that the start of hostilities is achieved by surprise and strikes against enemy airfields are unexpected, this ratio can change dramatically in a short time. Suffice it to recall the many hundreds of aircraft that the Soviet troops lost on the ground on June 22, 1941].

Let us consider the issue of engineering equipment of the theater of operations by the German troops. As is known, unlike the Soviet Union, the German command in 1941 did not waste energy on the construction of fortified areas on its territory. Field defense was also practically not prepared. Therefore, in the event of going on the offensive, the Soviet troops should not have encountered stubborn resistance directly along the line of the state border, and the counterattacks of the Wehrmacht tank divisions would also not have been able to significantly affect the overall operational situation.

Based on the availability of forces and means, the nature of the enemy's defense, it is possible to predict the ratio of losses of the parties in the operation. When attacking an unprepared defense, the Soviet troops nevertheless had to suffer twice as many losses as the defending German troops. When repulsing unprepared counterattacks by German tank divisions, the losses of the parties could be approximately equal. But already with the beginning of the withdrawal of the German troops, their losses should have significantly exceeded the losses of the Red Army formations leading the frontal pursuit. When switching to pursuit on parallel routes, taking into account flank attacks, the losses of the defending side in relation to the advancing could

make 3:1. But if we take into account that such pursuit often ends with the encirclement of the enemy, then

306

one can talk about the complete defeat of the opposing enemy grouping with relatively small losses among the advancing troops.

Thus, in theoretical terms, the implementation of the preventive strike plan proposed by the General Staff of the Red Army in mid-May 1941 was quite possible.

But this is just a theory. In practice, things could be different.

From the approved concept of a strategic offensive operation to the issuance of a direct combat order to the troops, as practice shows, it takes at least six months. It took the German command so much time to prepare for the implementation of the Barbarossa plan in 1941. It took the Soviet command the same amount of time to prepare the Manchurian strategic offensive operation in 1945. On May 15, 1941, the plan for delivering a preventive strike, proposed by the General Staff of the Red Army, was signed and not approved. This means that there was no reference point for the beginning of its implementation and there was no implementation itself, accompanied by an avalanche of directives, orders and other combat documents. At least, the enemy, who defeated the headquarters of the South-Western Front, several armies, a dozen corps and many dozens of divisions, did not manage to obtain a single such document, and Goebbels would not remain silent about its existence. This suggests that there were no such documents, and that the Soviet Union in 1941 was not preparing for an attack on Germany and was not preparing a strategic offensive operation.

Now, even contrary to the facts, let us assume that such an operation was being prepared, and let's talk about its chances of success. The question is not very simple and requires reasoning in parallel in several directions.

First, it was impossible to hide from the enemy months of preparations for such a large-scale operation. I am sure that, having learned about this, the German command

307

would take appropriate retaliatory measures, primarily in terms of creating a defense in depth, well developed in engineering terms, saturated with anti-tank weapons. It was no longer possible to count on an easy and quick breakthrough of such defense.

Secondly, the methods of operational and tactical camouflage were well developed in the German army. On the eve of the invasion, a special plan was developed for this purpose at the level of the General Staff of the German Land Forces. This was supposed to drastically reduce the effectiveness of the enemy's first air and artillery strikes and save his troops for subsequent actions.

Thirdly, the Wehrmacht significantly surpassed the Red Army in terms of the quantity and quality of command and control equipment, which was one of the determining factors, primarily in the offensive, when it was practically impossible to rely on wired communication lines. The Nazis widely and quite skillfully used radio communications in the link from the general staff to a separate tank crew. The Soviet troops, on the other hand, experienced an acute shortage of radio stations, and commanders, commanders and staffs were not trained to work using these controls. There was a kind of radio fear among some, while others sinned by transmitting combat orders and reports in plain text. In the first case, command and control of troops was disrupted before the laying of a wire communication line; in the second case, the transmitted information often became the property of the enemy. This was fully manifested in June 1941 and repeatedly made itself felt in the future.

Fourth, the human factor. By June 1941, many Wehrmacht generals had not only a good military education, great practice in command and control, but also offensive experience gained during the Polish campaign and in the West in 1939-1940. For example, the Chief of the General Staff of the German Land Forces, Colonel-General F. Halder

308

worked in this supreme body of operational control for about 25 years, all commanders of army groups, field armies and tank groups had an academic education behind them and served in these positions from 5 to 10 years.

The condition of the officer corps of the Red Army was far from the best. Undoubtedly, the repressions of 1937-1938 had an effect. According to incomplete data, three Marshals of the Soviet Union, 14 commanders of the 1st and 2nd ranks, 60 commanders, 136 commanders were repressed at that time. It should also be remembered that in the last pre-war years the number of the Red Army increased sharply: if in 1935 there were 930 thousand people in its ranks, then on January 1, 1941, 4.2 million people were already under arms. Due to the mass conscription, new associations, formations and parts.

To cover the shortage in senior command personnel in the summer of 1940, at the request of People's Commissar of Defense S.K. Tymoshenko, the cases of more than three hundred repressed military leaders were reviewed. As a result, almost 250 commanders were returned to service. Among them were K.K. Rokossovsky; A.V. Gorbатов, A.I. Todorsky, A.V. Golubev and others. By January 1, 1941, more than 12 thousand commanders and political workers returned to military service, mainly from among those who were not arrested in 1937-1938, but were under the supervision of the NKVD. (Portuguese R.M. Command personnel of the Soviet Armed Forces during the Great Patriotic War. M., VAF, 1991. S. 6-10.)

At the same time, it must be admitted that the professional level of training of the highest commanding staff of the Red Army was not high. People's Commissar of Defense of the USSR Marshal of the Soviet Union S.K. Timoshenko and Chief of the General Staff of the Red Army General of the Army G.K. Zhukov had a military education at the level of academic courses. Commander of the Western Special Military District, General of the Army D.G. Pavlov was appointed to the post in June 1940, having behind him the experience of commanding a tank brigade. Troop Commander

309

of the Kyiv Special Military District, Colonel General M.P. Kirponos was appointed to the post in February 1941. Prior to that, from 1934 to 1939 he was the head of the Kazan Infantry School, during the Soviet-Finnish war he commanded a division for six months, in 1940 he commanded a rifle corps for two months, after which he was immediately appointed commander of the Leningrad Military District, and also six months later he was transferred to the commander of the largest - the Kiev Special Military District. Just as swift were the career rises of the majority of army commanders, of very many corps and division commanders. At the same time, it should be noted that, having received high positions, they had no experience in preparing and conducting front-line and army offensive operations, offensive battles of rifle and, above all, mechanized (tank) formations.

Not the best was the state of command personnel and at the level of regiments, battalions and companies. Nearly 70 percent of the commanding and commanding staff had experience in their position from one to six months. Up to 50 percent of battalion commanders, almost 68 percent of company and platoon commanders had only six months of training in courses. (TsAMO. F. 4. Op. 14, d. 2371, l. 37.)

In addition to the relatively low professional level of the top command staff of the Red Army, there is a significant shortage of staff. By mid-May 1940, it was 35 percent.

The military training of reserve officers was extremely low. Of this category of persons who, in the event of war, were to assume positions of responsibility, only 0.2 percent had a higher military education, 10 percent graduated from military schools, and the remaining almost 90 percent completed short-term courses for reserve officers.

If we take into account all these negative points, then the ability of the Red Army in 1941 to prepare and conduct a strategic offensive operation with the aim of defeating the

310

opposing group of German troops. After all, such an operation, in addition to the "revolutionary" impulse, requires a lot, which at that time the Red Army practically did not have. This does not mean at all that the top military leaders considered themselves defective. I am sure that in case of receipt of the corresponding order by S.K. Timoshenko, G.K. Zhukov, D.G. Pavlov, M.P. Kirponos, commanders of armies, commanders and division commanders subordinate to them would lead their troops on the offensive. Another question is how would this offensive end? The experience of the Soviet-Finnish war showed that it was very difficult to count on an easy victory for the Red Army. But what would actually happen today is impossible to say with complete certainty.

At present, thanks to the development of computer technology, military educational institutions in various countries practice modeling the results of combat operations by the sum of various indicators. Calculating the outcome of a strategic offensive operation using such a model is very difficult, or rather, even impossible. Objective indicators merge with subjective ones so tightly that the calculations are not amenable to dry mathematical analysis. If we also add the time factor to them, then not a single, even the most perfect, electronic calculating machine can cope with such forecasts.

And one more very important point. The Soviet leadership, which at the beginning of 1941 had only the "Treaty of Friendship and Borders with Germany" dated September 28, 1939, but had no such agreements either with Poland, or with Great Britain, or with France, or with other European countries, not with the United States, well understood what international isolation the USSR would find itself in in the event of a preemptive strike against German troops located on the territory of Poland.

When the troops of the Byelorussian and Ukrainian fronts entered Poland in the fall of 1939, the government and the high command of this country, assessing the real events, were forced to state that Pol

311

Russia is not at war with the Soviet Union. At the same time, it must be remembered that the government of this country did not emigrate to the USSR, but to England, with which Poland had a corresponding alliance agreement. And if the Soviet troops attacked the German troops stationed on the territory of Poland, the USSR would automatically be declared an aggressor and would find itself in a state of war with Poland and England. When the Soviet troops went on the offensive on the territory of Czechoslovakia occupied by the Germans, the USSR automatically became an opponent of the Czechoslovak government in exile and France.

And, finally, we should not forget the position taken by the governments of England and the USA at that time, which were the most active supporters of the redistribution of the world in order to obtain new sources of raw materials, cheap labor and the most extensive markets for their products. To solve these problems, it was necessary, first of all, to weaken Germany and Russia as much as possible, which at that time were the fastest developing countries in Europe. A protracted war between these countries was the best solution to this problem. It only remained to find a worthy reason to start such a war. An attack by the USSR on German troops located on the territory of Poland and Hungary would immediately solve this problem. Moreover, after the USSR was declared an aggressor, the United States and other countries unleashed

hands in terms of providing support and assistance to the affected side, and England and France received the opportunity for the most free political maneuver in the future.

The plan to change the balance of forces and the situation in Europe as a result of Germany's war against the USSR was a complete success. The war practically ruined many leading states of Europe.

Germany lost the war, the troops of the countries of the anti-Hitler coalition with fire and sword entered its territory, ruining everything in their path. Particularly affected was the eastern part of Germany, where German troops were

312

There was fierce resistance from the Red Army and almost every city had to be taken by storm. The western part of Germany, where the Allies were advancing, was practically not destroyed. The total losses of Germany in killed and missing amounted to 9.4 million people. During the war, Germany's industry was depleted, 25% of the housing stock and the country's infrastructure were destroyed. 20% of industrial enterprises turned out to be unsuitable for restoration. In terms of production capacity, Germany was thrown back to the level of 1936, and in some industries even to an earlier period.

Allies of Germany, Romania and Hungary, were also quite badly burned by the flames of war, losing 475 thousand and 809 thousand people, respectively. At the same time, on the eve of the inevitable defeat, Romania even managed to drastically change its status and, from a defeated country, end the war among the victorious NIC countries.

Poland suffered quite a lot. The Nazis destroyed about 40% of the national wealth of this country, almost 65% of industrial enterprises. More than 4 million people died during the war

Poles.

But the Soviet Union suffered the most, becoming the main arena of fierce military operations. In 1941 and 1942, German troops fought and captured a large part of the Soviet Union. At the same time, the infrastructure of this unit was destroyed not only by the advancing German, but also by the retreating Soviet troops. In 1943 and 1944, Soviet troops fought to drive the enemy out of their territory. And again, the infrastructure in this territory was destroyed by the advancing Soviet and retreating German troops. If we take into account that during the occupation of Soviet territory, the Nazis endlessly plundered the valuables located there, destroyed and exploited the civilian population, then without exaggeration we can say that the European part from the western border to the Volga and the North Caucasus in 1941-1944

313

sang no less than five devastating invasions. The country's total human losses amounted to 26.6 million people. 25 million people were left homeless. 1710 cities and towns, more than 70 thousand villages and villages, 6 million buildings, 32 thousand industrial enterprises, 4100 railway stations, about 63 thousand kilometers of railway tracks, 1870 railway bridges and other structures were destroyed. (World Wars of the XX century. Book 3. Second World War. Historical essay. M.: Nauka, 2005. P. 548-550.)

Then followed the operations of the Red Army outside the territory of the Soviet Union. Only irretrievably (killed, died from wounds and diseases) Soviet troops lost in Poland - 600.2 thousand people, in Czechoslovakia - 139.9 thousand people, in Hungary - 140 thousand people, in Romania - 69 thousand people, in Austria - 26 thousand people, in Yugoslavia - 8 thousand people, in Bulgaria - 997 people, in Norway - 3.4 thousand people, in Germany itself - 102 thousand people. In total, more than 1 million people were irretrievably lost, and more than 2 million people were injured and became crippled during the liberation of the territories of these states. (Calculated on the basis of: Russia and the USSR in the wars of the twentieth century: Statistical study. 2001. p. 449.)

What happened after the end of the Second World War?

The United States, which built big business on the war in Europe for more than five years and tripled its national wealth over the years, lost 405,000 people in various theaters of military operations during the Second World War. The loss of British troops amounted to 375 thousand people, France - 600 thousand people. At the same time, the US infrastructure was not destroyed at all, the destruction in the territory of Great Britain and France was insignificant. Under control, these countries received the little-destroyed western part of Germany and the funds that they began to invest in developing their own economy and improving the well-being of their own people. USSR, which is at war

314

suffered the greatest human and material losses, got under his control the heavily destroyed territories of the countries of Eastern and Central Europe, for the restoration of which he began to invest new huge funds to the detriment of his own people. The Second World War, now in economic form, continued for many more years...

But let us return to the events of June 1941, from which we are separated by almost 70 years. Many events of that time have become known, some are still a "blank spot" in the history book. Due to the presence of these "blank spots", some researchers have the opportunity to falsify history, put forward bold hypotheses, and make assumptions. Only the complete removal of the secrecy stamp from all documents relating to the beginning of the Great Patriotic War will be able to put an end to many still relevant issues.

As for the preparation of the USSR for an attack on Germany in the summer of 1941 and the possible development of a preventive strategic offensive operation of the Red Army, this remains in the realm of hypotheses, conjectures and reasoning. At the same time, the fact is undeniable that on June 22, 1941, it was the German troops who invaded the Soviet Union with all their might, dealt a crushing blow not only to the armies covering the state border, but also to the civilian population and developed a swift offensive to a great depth in accordance with the real-life plan "Barbarossa". In this regard, Germany's aggression against the USSR has become a fact that no one will ever be able to dispute.

Vladislav Savin

HOW IT WOULD BE IN JULY 1941

As you know, one of the models of combat operations is the game of chess. In chess, when analyzing arts, it is customary to analyze both actually made moves and other (unrealized) variations. In this way, dubious moves are revealed, as well as missed opportunities. In military history, it is not customary to do a detailed analysis of unrealized scenarios under the pretext of "history does not tolerate the subjunctive mood." But without this detailed analysis, much in the events of that time remains incomprehensible, primarily the relative influence of various causes on the defeat of the Red Army in the initial period of the war.

This article analyzes the expected development of events in the event that the Red Army had time to mobilize, deploy to the theater and be the first to strike at Germany.

I must say right away that everything written below is my fantasy and has a very distant relation to the reality of the summer of 1941. However, I consider it useful to make such a detailed analysis of the proposed development of events, since in reasoning like "The Red Army strikes and hordes of BT tanks, destroying everything in their path, rush to Berlin" or "The Red Army strikes, loses in the offensive all their tanks, and the German tank divisions cut off and destroy the shock groups of the Red Army in Eastern Poland", first of all, the details are lost. Namely, in de-

316

hoists in this case, and many reasons for the possible success of the Red Army in delivering the first blow are hidden.

So, let's begin.

On June 25, covert mobilization is announced in the USSR under the guise of Big Training Camps (BUS). By July 1, the PribOVO, ZapOVO, KOVO and ODVO formations will receive vehicles, tractors and weapons for the formed mechanized corps, artillery regiments of the RGK, anti-tank artillery brigades, engineering units of the RGK. In total, 80-100 thousand vehicles and 8-10 thousand tractors were mobilized - compared with the total number of vehicles and tractors in the Red Army as of June 1, the figure is quite small. Nevertheless, the troops taking part in the first strike are provided with vehicles and traction equipment. Mechanized corps of the second echelon receive 45 and 76 mm caliber artillery pieces instead of tanks. On July 1, cover plans are put into action, cover divisions occupy the foreground. Rifle corps of the second echelon of the western military districts are concentrated 30-40 km from the border. The aviation of the internal districts, intended for deployment to the west, is already concentrated on field airfields near the border. Aircraft of new types are provided with crews, and aircraft of old types are relocated to the rear. New machine-gun battalions are being deployed in the fortified areas on the border.

June 15 is the early release of cadets of military schools, to | July graduates arrive in the troops. By the same date, the retraining of 24,000 enlisted men for the positions of junior commanders is coming to an end.

On July 1 and 2, all troops allocated to participate in the first strike receive the necessary weapons and equipment in the areas of concentration, and the formations are being reorganized according to the new state. On July 3, rifle divisions of the second echelons of the western military districts begin to move towards the border, and mechani

317

rated corps allocated to participate in the strike (6th, 13th, 14th, 20th in the ZapOVO and 4th, 8th, 9th, 15th, 19th, 22nd in KOVO), begin to advance to the areas of concentration. In addition, the 21st Rifle and 11th Mechanized Corps in ZapOVO, the 16th Mechanized and 55th Rifle Corps in KOVO are preparing for distracting strikes. In the north, the 1st mechanized corps is concentrated in the Allakurti region, and the 10th mechanized corps is concentrated in the Vyborg region.

In KOVO, by June 28, the unloading of the 63rd, 66th rifle corps, the 18th rifle division from the PribvVO was completed, after which they begin to unload the 30th and 33rd rifle corps from the Orvo. By July 4, the formations of the Or-VO, as well as the 2nd mechanized corps from the OdVO, finish unloading, the arrived troops are concentrated in the areas of Kovel, Lvov and Stanislav.

By the evening of July 5, all troops are leaving for the designated areas. In ZapOVO, the 4th Rifle Corps occupies the Grodno UR, the 1st Rifle Corps - Osovets UR, the 5th Rifle Corps - Zambruvsky UR, the 28th Rifle Corps and the newly arrived 2nd Rifle Corps - Brest UR. In KOVO, the second echelon rifle corps replaces the divisions covering the state border. The 31st Rifle Corps occupies Vladimir-Volynsky UR, the 36th Rifle Corps - Strumilovsky UR, the 37th Rifle Corps - Rava-Russian UR, the 49th Rifle Corps and part of the 8th Rifle Corps - Przemyśl UR.

Let us now recall the closing speech of Marshal Timoshenko at a meeting in December 1940 and his discussions about the forms of an operational breakthrough. We are interested in the last, third, form:

“And the third form provides for the delivery of several mutually linked strikes ... and the formation of separate army breakthroughs in several operational directions

(The prototype of this form of breakthrough is the Brusilov offensive in 1916; the Germans used it during the offensive in Poland).

This form of breakthrough is also quite modern. She

318

applicable in the presence of relatively large forces and means sufficient to ensure the production of each of the operational breakthroughs to the required size.

This form of breakthrough is more in line with theaters with a relatively underdeveloped network of communications. It facilitates covert preparation, shortens the (duration) of regrouping; the offensive develops on a broad front, within which the enemy will be shocked and pinned down, his reserves will be destroyed, and it will be easier for the attacker to carry out a concentric strike favorable to the encirclement of the enemy!

The distribution of troops across fronts and armies, according to Vatutin's note, corresponds precisely to this scheme. Subsequently, the Red Army will advance in this way, for example, in the battle of Smolensk (attacks by five army groups on the 20th of July) and in Operation Bagration.

So, what would be the shock army groups of the Red Army of the June-July 1941 model? Their approximate composition is shown in the following table:

COMPOSITION OF THE STRIKING GROUPS OF THE RKKA, EARLY JULY 1941

Composition of the strike group

44th Rifle Corps, 13th Mechanized Corps, 6th Cavalry Corps, 6th PTABR, 2-3 RGK Artillery Regiments

13th Army Western Front

4th Army Western Front | 47th rifle, 6th, 14th mechanized corps, 7th PTABR, 4-5 artillery regiments of the RGK

5th Army Southwestern 15th, 63rd Rifle, 22nd, 9th Mechanized Frontalized Corps, 1st PTABR, 4-5 artillery regiments of the RGK

1 Materials of the meeting of the top leadership of the Red Army on December 23-31, 1940

319

Composition of the strike group

20th Army Southwestern | 27th Rifle Corps

front

6th, 66th rifle, 4th, 15th mechanized corps, 2nd PTABR, 4-5 artillery regiments of the RGK

6th Army Southwestern Front

30th Rifle Corps, 8th, 19th Mechanized Corps, 18th Rifle Division, 3rd PTABR, 3rd-4th RGK Artillery Regiment

26th Army Southwestern Front

,21st Army South-3 21st Army Southwest! 8th (partial), 33rd rifle, 2nd mechanized front, 5th cavalry corps, 5th anti-tank brigade, 2-3 artillery regiments of the RGK

Let's give one more quote from Marshal Timoshenko's speech:

"The question arises: how is it better to make an operational breakthrough, in what battle formations to send troops? Given the structure of defense and means of attack, this is a topical issue of today.

A breakthrough can usually be carried out, based on the composition of modern shock armies, by the following typical options:

Option 1 - Rifle formations, supported by a powerful echelon of PP tanks, after powerful artillery preparation under the cover of a barrage of fire and short-range mass aviation, break into the tactical defense of the enemy and create conditions for throwing mobile formations into the rear... This the option is applicable in conditions of a highly developed enemy defense and when the defense line passes through tank-inaccessible terrain.

The danger of this option lies in what it was for breakthroughs during the First World War - they were silenced, since the pace of the attack did not exceed the pace of concentration of operational defense reserves.

The 2nd option is applicable in conditions opposite to

320

® Kovel

® Katowice Lusk ®

Krakow

Plan of the first operation of the Red Army in the West

nyh first option. It consists in the fact that mobile mechanized formations are not reserved at the initial stage of the operation, but rush forward and, supported by powerful artillery and aviation fire, destroy enemy defenses on a wide front ...

We saw this form of breakthrough on the Belgian border and on the river. The Somme in the summer of 1940.

This form of breakthrough has a great operational effect; it corresponds to the character of modern armaments!"

In July 1941, mechanized corps armed with new types of tanks were supposed to be used according to the 2nd option - they were not reserved at the initial stage, but were allocated to the first line.

Materials of the meeting of the top leadership of the Red Army on December 23-31, 1940 Vir://
tltsega.P6.ga/dos\$/da/zou-pe\~1940/

11 A. Isaev 32 1

The 17th, 20th mechanized corps, 50th, 155th rifle divisions are in reserve in the ZapOVO, in the KOVO - seven rifle divisions of the Kharkov military district (45th and 67th rifle corps, 214th rifle division), as well as the 24th mechanized corps. The divisions of the HVO are distributed as follows: two divisions each in the 21st and 26th armies, one division each in the 5th, 20th and 6th armies. In addition, there are four divisions of the 7th Rifle Corps (116th, 147th, 196th, 206th Infantry Division).

Each strike group is assigned to the corps of rifle corps, artillery, engineering and other parts of the RGC. Thus, in each group (except for the group of the 20th Army) there are 8-12 divisions, plus an additional 30-40 artillery battalions of 76 mm and higher caliber corps), 1-2 motorcycle regiments (in mechanized corps), an engineer or pontoon bridge regiment of the RGK, 4-5 engineer, mine-sapper and engineer battalions (in rifle, mechanized corps and PTABR).

On June 26, the formation of fifteen rifle (or motorized rifle) divisions of the NKVD (three of them in Transcaucasia) and ten cavalry and mountain cavalry divisions (five in the North Caucasus Military District, two in the OdVO, one in the KhVO, one in OrVO, one - in SAVO).

After July 1, the German command begins to receive information about the concentration of Soviet troops on the border. Through diplomatic channels, the Soviet side is informed of the concern of the German government and requests to explain what is happening. In response, on July 4-5, demonstration exercises of the 7th mechanized, 69th rifle corps are held near Moscow, near Kiev - the 34th rifle, 25th mechanized and 2nd airborne corps. Participated in the exercises

322

There are more than 1,000 tanks and a large number of artillery and aviation.

In addition, under any pretext (provocations, German agents, troop movements), claims are made against Finland, Turkey and Iran and the 1st, 10th (on the Soviet-Finnish border) are "lit up"), 26th (transferred to Transcaucasia), 27th and 28th mechanized corps and cavalry divisions of the ZakVO and SAVO. It is given to understand that on the border with Finland, Turkey and Iran there are significant forces of the Red Army, including about 3 thousand tanks.

The German side learns (and is helped in this) that the tank and mechanized troops participating in the exercises and concentrated on the borders with Finland, Turkey and Iran are the best trained in the Red Army (and this is in relation to the 1st, 7th th mechanized corps, 6th and 9th tank divisions, in general, corresponds to reality).

As a result, it becomes clear that more than 4,000 tanks of the Red Army are at a great distance from the Soviet-German border and will not be able to take part in the attack in the coming days. According to the pre-war estimates of the German command, the total number of tanks in the Red Army was about ten thousand, that is, 4 thousand - this is 40% of the estimated total. And if such a number of tanks, including the most trained tank divisions, are not on the Soviet-German border, then how can one strike without them? As a result, the fears of the German side regarding the situation on the Soviet-German border are dispelled (at least for a while), and its attention is switched to the situation around Finland, Iran and Turkey. In Germany, at all levels of government, discussions are being held on how to respond to the claims (demands) of the USSR to these countries. The Soviet side proposes to discuss this situation on July 7 (the first working day of the week), for which Molotov should fly to Berlin.

Nevertheless, the German troops manage to turn around in the theater of operations and occupy the formation for defense.

323

military operations - the main part of the infantry divisions occupy positions on the border and near it, tank, motorized and some part of the infantry divisions are in reserve 50-150 kilometers from the border.

By the morning of July 6, everything is ready for the attack of the Red Army.

As in the summer of 1944, the Red Army, mobilized and concentrated on the border, outnumbers the Wehrmacht by about two times, and in aviation - by about five times. Early in the morning, Soviet aviation crosses the border and strikes at German airfields, bridges, warehouses and locations of units. At the same time, artillery preparation begins.

At dawn, Soviet airborne troops land groups of 50-100 men to capture the airfields. Airfields near Krosno, Modorovka, Khostyn, Oak, Svidnik, Biala Podlaska, Sedlec, Krzhevica, Prasnysh are being attacked. Paratroopers' knapsack flamethrowers are used to destroy aircraft.

After 1-2 hours, shock mechanized groups cross the border in narrow sections of the breakthrough (three kilometers per division). The German infantry covering divisions located in the breakthrough areas suffer huge losses, since at least four Soviet divisions are deployed against each of them, reinforced by 3-5 artillery regiments and supported by aviation. By the end of the day, the 137th, 131st and 167th Infantry Divisions of the Army Group Center, the 1st Mountain Rifle and the 56th, 68th, 71st Infantry Divisions of the Army Group South were actually destroyed, in addition, the 257th and 62nd Infantry Divisions suffered serious losses. Soviet troops are landing in the rear of the German troops, seizing airfields, railway stations, bridges, and highway junctions. The Soviet 4th mechanized corps in the afternoon collides with the 97th German light infantry division, advancing to the border. Since the strike of the 4th mechanized corps is supported

324

With 1-2 artillery regiments of the RGK and at least one aviation division, the 97th light infantry division cannot stop the advance of Soviet tankers and suffers heavy losses. The Soviet 6th Mechanized Corps of the Western Front bypasses the German 47th Tank Corps, by the end of the day, the advanced units of the 6th Mechanized Corps in the Lukow area collide with the 46th Tank Corps of Army Group Center. By the end of the day, Soviet strike groups are advancing 30-40 kilometers deep into German (former Polish) territory. In other sectors of the front, Soviet troops are also attacking. In the Rava-Russkaya area, three divisions of the 37th Rifle Corps are now deployed against three German infantry divisions instead of one Soviet 41st Rifle Division. Three Soviet divisions at least force the 262nd German infantry division to withdraw, and perhaps even more serious troubles would have happened to the German troops on this sector of the front. In a number of other sectors (first of all, in the sector of the 27th Rifle Corps between Strumilovsky and Vladimir-Volynsky fortified areas), Soviet troops were also advancing, but insignificantly. Nevertheless, the activity of the Soviet troops does not allow the German command to remove at least a few infantry divisions from the front to put them in reserve.

On the right wing of the Western Front, the 21st Rifle (two divisions) and the 11th Mechanized Corps of the 3rd Army, with the support of the 8th PTABR and 1-2 RGK artillery regiments, attack the German 162nd Infantry Division. The German command reinforces this area with the 57th Panzer Corps (12th and 19th Panzer and 18th Motorized Divisions). However, before his approach, the 162nd Infantry Division manages to suffer significant losses. By evening, the advance of the Soviet troops

stopped.

On the right wing of the Southern Front, the 55th Rifle and 16th Mechanized Corps of the 18th Army, with the support of the 4th PTABR and 1-2 artillery regiments of the RGK, cross the border and collide with the Romanian troops. The German divisions in Rumania are neither ready for defense nor

325

to the offensive and do not form a continuous front. By the end of the day, the Romanian troops located near the border were defeated, the Soviet 16th mechanized corps entered the operational space. It follows from intelligence data that the German and Romanian troops are not only unable to strike at the flank of the Southwestern Front in the direction of Proskurov, but their forces

not enough even to organize a sustainable defense. In the evening, the 18th mechanized and 2nd cavalry corps of the 9th army are given the task of striking from the area southeast of Yass towards the shock group of the 18th army. In addition, two rifle divisions of the 7th rifle corps are transferred to the Southern Front, which begin loading into echelons.

By the end of the first day of the war, the German command still does not realize the scale of the catastrophe and comes to the conclusion that the situation is not so bad - the defense of only seven or eight infantry divisions was broken through, and mechanical units of an unknown force entered the breakthrough. However, based on the pre-war estimates of German intelligence, these forces cannot be very large (especially since large forces of the Red Army are located on the borders with Finland, Turkey and Iran). Based on these data, it is planned to assemble two strike groups to repel the strike and defeat the invading formations. One, as part of the Army Group "Center", - the 24th and 47th tank corps, the 1st cavalry division, should strike to the north-west along the course of the Western Bug and cut off the Soviet troops that had broken through under the base. mechanical parts. The other, as part of Army Group South, the 3rd and 48th Panzer Corps, was to cut off the advancing Soviet grouping of the 6th Army with a strike from the Tomaszów area to the west. The 267th, 255th infantry, 99th light infantry divisions and the reserve 14th tank corps were advanced against the Soviet grouping of the 5th Army, advancing from the Lyuboml region. The strike group of the 26th army was not adequately assessed by the German command, it was decided to parry this strike using three reserve divisions located in the Rzeszow area. Strike Group of the 21st Army

326

generally goes unnoticed. The mobile groups of the 21st Army by the end of the day connected with the landing groups and captured 40 serviceable Yu-88 bombers at the airfields near Krosno.

Second day of hostilities.

On the southernmost section of the Soviet-German border, the Soviet 2nd mechanized and 5th cavalry corps advance practically without resistance. In the morning they occupy Krosno and move on towards Tarnow and Krakow. Behind them, the 33rd Rifle Corps is advancing to the west. The 19th mechanized corps, advancing to the northwest, goes to Rzeszow, where it collides with the 125th infantry, 100th light infantry and 4th mountain rifle divisions. Fierce battles flared up outside the city, in the evening the 30th rifle corps entered the area. Southeast of Rzeszow, the Soviet 49th and 8th rifle corps are connected. The German 101st Light Infantry and 257th Infantry Divisions are surrounded. The 8th mechanized corps advances along the San River to Sandomierz, in the evening the 12th Panzer Division occupies the city. Following the 8th mechanized corps, the 18th rifle division is moving. The 4th mechanized corps advances to the north in the direction of Pulawy - Annopol.

Parts of the 6th Rifle Corps are blocking the remnants of the 97th Light Infantry Division, two divisions of this corps are moving after the 66th Rifle Corps. The Soviet 15th mechanized corps is moving towards Lublin. The 66th and part of the forces of the 6th rifle corps are deployed with their front to the north-east to fend off possible counterattacks from the Zamostye region. To the south is the mobile reserve - the 24th mechanized corps. The troops of the fortified regions, the divisions of the 37th, 36th, 27th, and 31st rifle corps, pin down the opposing German infantry divisions on the front from Rava-Russkaya to Lyuboml. Twelve Soviet divisions deployed against thirteen German divisions, Soviet divisions supported by a corps

327

artillery and machine-gun and artillery battalions of fortified areas. The actions of the Soviet troops do not allow the Germans to remove a single division from this segment of the border, since in a number of sectors the German troops are withdrawing, like the 262nd division on the first day of hostilities.

In the morning the German 3rd and 48th tank corps attacked the 6th and 66th rifle corps. The Soviet troops were reinforced by the 5th PTABR and 5-6 artillery regiments, five Soviet divisions were deployed against six German divisions and 15-20 artillery battalions attached, to which 30-35 artillery battalions were attached. In the afternoon, the defense of the Soviet rifle units was additionally strengthened by one division of the 24th mechanized corps, the rest of the 24th mechanized corps began to move after the 15th mechanized corps in the direction of Lublin.

On the sector of the 5th Army, the 9th and 22nd Mechanized Corps occupy Chelm and on the way to Lublin they collide with the German 14th Panzer Corps. Since the German corps is a reserve corps, practically no reserves are attached to it, while the Soviet mechanized corps are reinforced by three RGK artillery regiments and engineering units. The 15th Rifle Corps is turned to the north and repels the attacks of the German 267th and 255th Infantry Divisions. The 63rd Rifle Corps advances south and collides with the approaching 97th Light Infantry Division. The 1st PTABR remains in reserve in the Helm area. By the end of the day, the Soviet 15th mechanized corps approaches Lublin. |

In the 4th Army, the 6th Mechanized Corps in the Lukow area is fighting with the German 46th Panzer Corps. The German corps is a reserve corps, consisting of two divisions and one reinforced regiment, while the 6th mechanized corps, consisting of three full-fledged divisions and corps units, is additionally reinforced with two RGK artillery regiments. Soviet troops have an advantage in strength, but they cannot advance significantly during the day. The 47th rifle and 14th mechanized corps are deployed with their front to the southeast for

328

control of a possible strike from the Byala Podlaska region. In the morning, the German 47th and 24th tank corps and the 1st cavalry division attacked the 47th rifle and 14th mechanized corps. Since the Soviet troops were reinforced by the 7th PTABR and 5-6 artillery regiments, it was not possible to break through the Soviet defenses. After the 20th mechanized corps was additionally brought into this area, the advance of the German divisions was finally stopped.

In the 13th Army, the 13th Mechanized Corps moves towards Warsaw, followed by the 6th Cavalry Corps. The 44th Rifle Corps is advancing behind the moving units. The 13th mechanized corps collides with the German 78th infantry division, and the 17th infantry division is also deployed against it.

Two divisions of the 5th Rifle Corps and units of the Zambrovsky UR are opposed by four combat-ready German infantry divisions (23rd, 7th, 268th, 263rd). By evening, two German divisions were withdrawn from this sector, which, together with the 258th Infantry Division, were preparing to counterattack the 13th Mechanized Corps. Six divisions of the 2nd and 28th rifle corps and units of the Brestsky Ur were opposed by six German infantry divisions (292nd, 252nd, 134th, 31st, 45th, 34th). Soviet divisions, as in the Southwestern Front, are supported by corps artillery and machine gun and artillery battalions of the fortified area. The German command cannot remove a single division from this sector.

On the left sector of the Western Front, the Soviet 21st Rifle and 11th Mechanized Corps are fighting with the German 162nd Infantry Division and the 57th Tank Corps. The Soviet troops have superiority in forces, by the evening the German command is additionally transferring the 20th motorized division to this sector.

After it became clear that the Soviet 2nd, 8th, and 15th mechanized corps had entered the operational space, the mechanized corps and the 57th tank division began

329

4-5-

Y Y

movement to the area of Kremenets, Brody. The remaining formations of the 16th Army are being prepared for loading into echelons.

Of the seven divisions transported from the Kharkov Military District, two divisions of the 45th and 67th rifle corps cross the border in the zone of the 21st and 26th armies by evening, and two more divisions are on their way to the border. The three remaining divisions are still in the echelons.

Soviet airborne troops (1st, 2nd, 4th VDK) seize crossings on the Vistula from Sandomierz to Warsaw. The newly formed special detachment of transport aviation on PS-84 aircraft, mobilized in the Red Army from Aeroflot, is being transferred to the airborne troops. Landing groups landed to capture airfields were partly destroyed, partly switched to partisan operations. As a result of their actions, more than 300 German aircraft were destroyed and captured in serviceable condition, as a result of which the combat power of the 2nd and 4th German air fleets was significantly weakened.

In the evening, the German command makes a decision - the 3rd tank group, consisting of four tank, three motorized and three infantry divisions, go on the offensive in the direction of Suwalki - Brest, the 4th tank group, consisting of three tank, two motorized and two infantry divisions to concentrate in the area of Warsaw and then strike in the direction of Warsaw - Brest towards the 2nd Panzer Group.

Third day of hostilities.

In the morning, the 18th mechanized and 2nd cavalry corps of the 9th Army of the Southern Front launched an offensive against the formation with the shock group of the 18th Army. The Romanian divisions confront the Soviet troops, the defense of which was broken through in a few hours. By evening, the forward detachments of the 18th and 16th mechanized corps united in the rear of the German and Romanian troops.

In the middle of the day, the 2nd mechanized corps occupies Tarnow. To the south, the 5th cavalry corps is advancing, which goes to the re

330

ke Dunaets and moves on. The 12th Panzer Division of the 8th Mechanized Corps seizes Kielce with a surprise attack, the other two divisions of the 8th Mechanized Corps cross the Vistula in the Sandomierz area and to the south-west. In the evening, the 18th Rifle Division also approaches Sandomierz. In the Rzeszow area, the Soviet 19th mechanized and 30th rifle corps block the German 125th infantry, 100th light infantry and 4th mountain rifle divisions. The 8th and 49th rifle corps continue to block the German 101st light infantry, 257th infantry divisions in the Yaroslav area, in the morning two divisions of the 8th rifle corps begin to move towards Rzeszow. The 4th mechanized corps reaches the Vistula in the Puława-Annopol section. At the same time, parts of the corps occupy a circular defense near the bridges across the Vistula, without forming a continuous front. The main forces of the corps - in the Pulawy area - are preparing to strike at Deblin in the rear of the German 46th Panzer Corps.

The remnants of the German 97th light infantry division were finally defeated, the blocking division of the 6th rifle corps connected with the main forces of the corps. The German 3rd and 48th tank corps continue to attack the 66th and 6th rifle corps and one division of the 24th mechanized corps. The attacks are unsuccessful. Two divisions of the 24th mechanized corps continue to move in the direction of Lublin.

The Soviet 15th mechanized corps occupies Lublin with a sudden blow. Parts of the German 14th Panzer Corps are surrounded. The 63rd Rifle Corps, pushing back the German 99th Light Infantry Division, is advancing south.

The 6th mechanized corps continues to attack the German 46th tank corps. The SS division "Reich" has to be withdrawn to the Deblin area to fend off the threat from the south, as a result, the 6th mechanized corps knocks out German troops from Lukow.

The German 47th and 24th tank corps, reinforced by the 1st cavalry division, continue to attack the Soviet 47th rifle, 14th and part of the forces of the 20th mech

331

lowered hulls. The attacks are unsuccessful. Two divisions of the 20th mechanized corps are moving west to the north of the 6th mechanized corps. Behind the 20th mechanized corps, the 155th rifle division enters the gap.

The 44th rifle and 13th mechanized corps are fighting with five German infantry divisions. The 6th Cavalry Corps collides with Army Group Center's reserve, the 293rd Infantry Division.

Soviet troops are thrown into the region of Radom and Krakow.

The 5th mechanized corps and the 57th tank division receive an order to move in a forced march to reach the Radzekhuw area in 24 hours. The rest of the formations of the 16th Army are loaded into echelons.

The advance of the 3rd Panzer Group fails. Eleven Soviet divisions were deployed against eighteen German divisions. The Soviet defense is based on the fortified regions of Grodno and Osovetsky, in which 16 machine-gun and artillery battalions are deployed. As field filling, the fortified areas are occupied by six rifle divisions, reinforced by corps artillery. A strike force operates between the fortified areas - two rifle divisions and a mobile group consisting of the 11th mechanized corps, the 8th PTABR and 1-2 artillery regiments of the RGK. Theoretical constructions are confirmed - with the help of fortified areas, enemy forces that are one and a half times superior (in divisions) are held back.

The front reserves of the Western Front are located: the 50th Rifle Division - Lida, the 17th Mechanized Corps - Volkovysk. The 22nd Army marches towards the junction of the Western and Northwestern fronts. The advance of the columns of the 4th Panzer Group does not go unnoticed — the 17th mechanized corps in the evening receives an order to advance into the zone of the 13th Army, and the 7th mechanized corps of the 28th Army prepares for a combined march to the Baranovichi region. The remaining divisions of the 28th Army are preparing to be loaded into echelons. In addition, the 19th Army is also preparing for loading.

332

By evening, the difficult situation of the actually encircled grouping of the German 4th and 6th armies, the 1st and 2nd tank groups becomes obvious. The German side decides to force the encircled troops to break through to the west. In the area of Radom, it was decided to create a group of formations from the OKH reserve to assist in the release of encircled troops. German mobile formations begin to experience a shortage of fuel.

Fourth day of hostilities.

The Soviet side puts forward an ultimatum to Romania - to stop resistance and to intern German troops stationed on Romanian territory. In the evening, Romania accepts an ultimatum, the Romanian troops stop resisting.

The 2nd mechanized corps occupies Krakow. To the south, the 5th Cavalry Corps follows him. The 33rd Rifle Corps enters the Dunaets River. The 19th Mechanized Corps and the 30th Rifle Corps continue to block the German 125th Infantry, 100th Light Infantry and 4th Mountain Rifle Divisions in the Rzeszow area. Two divisions of the 8th Rifle Corps are approaching the city, which makes it possible in the afternoon to remove the 19th mechanized corps from the encirclement ring, which begins to move towards the Vistula. Surrounded in the Rzeszow region, German troops receive an order to turn the city into a fortress and hold out to the last. The encircled German 101st light infantry and 257th infantry divisions were defeated. This makes it possible to remove two more infantry divisions from the inner front of the encirclement, which also begin to move to the west. The remnants of the German troops surrounded in the Yaroslav area continue to block two divisions of the 49th Rifle Corps.

German troops are concentrating for a breakthrough.

In the afternoon, the 24th mechanized corps enters the area east of Pulawy without one division, which, together with one tank division of the 4th mechanized corps

333

attacks from the rear of the German 46th Panzer Corps. German troops, in order to avoid encirclement, cross over to the left bank of the Vistula, but continue to hold Deblin. The 6th cavalry and part of the forces of the 20th mechanized corps block the German 293rd infantry division and advance detachments go to the Vistula. Three divisions of the 2nd Rifle Corps, together with the 155th Rifle Division, are blocking the German 292nd, 252nd and 134th Infantry Divisions.

The Soviet 6th, 4th, 20th and 24th mechanized corps complete the encirclement of the German 4th, 6th armies, 1st and 2nd tank groups. At the same time, the encircled German troops were divided into two "boilers" - the northern one (in the Brest region) and the southern one (in the Zamosc region).

By the end of the day, the German 14th Panzer Corps, surrounded by three times superior forces, was actually destroyed. The advance of the 63rd Rifle Corps was halted by units of the 3rd and 48th Tank Corps approaching from the south. The 1st PTABR was transferred to the Lublin area.

Against the fourteen Soviet tank, mechanized, cavalry and rifle divisions, two PTABR, 7-9 artillery regiments that came to the Vistula, the German command by the end of the fourth day of hostilities can oppose six divisions of the OKH reserve, which managed to unload in the areas of Katowice, Czystochowa, Radom and Lodz. In addition, four more divisions continue to unload (including the only motorized division, the 60th). The question arises of using these divisions - to create a new front to the west of the Vistula or to concentrate troops to release the grouping surrounded in the Lublin region? As a result, some German divisions of the OKH reserve occupy strongholds - Katowice, Czestochowa, Lodz, and are partially concentrated in the Warsaw-Radom area. They have no superiority over the Soviet mechanized units that form the outer front of the encirclement. High mobility of Soviet mechanized corps (compared to the German divisions of the OKH reserve)

334

makes it possible, finding gaps in the German defense, to throw out mobile detachments to the west of the Vistula. These detachments (corps motorcycle regiments of the 2nd, 8th, 4th, reconnaissance battalions of tank divisions) are supported by airborne assault forces, they manage to cut railways and highways in the rear of the German troops in several places, which delays the concentration of divisions intended for release of the encircled grouping.

By evening, two tank corps are concentrated in the "northern" and "southern" pockets for a breakthrough. Behind them, behind strong rearguards, follow the infantry divisions. The Soviet side reacted symmetrically - the 14th mechanized corps, 7th PTABR, 3-4 artillery regiments were removed from the inner ring of encirclement of the "northern" pocket and advanced to the south.

Fifth day of hostilities.

The Soviet Northern Front launches an offensive in Finland. As part of the front, two shock groups are being created - one in the Allakurti area (1st mechanized corps), the second - in the Vyborg area (22nd rifle and 10th mechanized corps). The Soviet troops met stubborn resistance from the Finnish and German divisions, and by the evening their advance had been halted.

The German 11th Army is surrounded in Romania. The rifle troops of the 18th and 9th armies (12 rifle divisions in total) are moving deep into Romanian territory to change mobile formations. The Soviet side put forward a demand to Romania to provide a corridor for the passage of Soviet troops in the direction of Bulgaria.

The attacks of the German 3rd Panzer Group are still unsuccessful. By evening, the 21st mechanized corps of the 22nd army entered the Grodno region, after which the situation on the right flank of the Western Front finally stabilized.

To repel the attack of the German 4th Panzer Group, the 13th

335

mechanized, 44th rifle corps and all attached artillery of the 13th army. By morning, the 17th mechanized corps enters this area. The 4th German tank group, consisting of three tank and two motorized divisions (the infantry divisions of the group have not yet approached), together with the five infantry divisions that had previously operated here, are attacking the troops of the 13th Army. Nine Soviet divisions were deployed against ten German divisions, the Soviet troops, as in the rest of the front, were reinforced by strong artillery. In the German tank divisions, part of the tanks and vehicles remained on the roads due to breakdowns. As a result, the German attacks fail.

Surrounded in the areas of Brest and Zamostye, German troops are making a breakthrough. The Soviet 24th mechanized corps with the 1st PTABR is deployed against the "northern" strike group, and the 9th mechanized and 63rd rifle corps are deployed against the "southern" strike group. All the efforts of the Soviet aviation are concentrated on the German troops breaking through.

In the morning, from the Sokal region in the direction of Zamostye, the strike group of the Soviet 20th Army created the day before - the 27th Rifle Corps and the approaching 5th Mechanized Corps, 57th Tank, 232nd Rifle Divisions, attacked. The German rearguards cannot withstand the blow; by the end of the day, the shock group of the 20th Army advances 20 km. Panic begins in the rear of the "southern" German group, all attempts to break through its strike group (3rd and 48th tank corps) are unsuccessful.

The German "northern" group initially achieves some success and advances 10-15 km towards Deblin. However, in the afternoon, the 14th mechanized corps, the 7th PTABR and attached artillery regiments attacked the flank of the German grouping from the north, after which the advance of the German tank corps was stopped.

By evening, the German mobile formations begin to feel the lack of ammunition.

The Soviet 19th mechanized corps forces the Vistula and

336

is a link between the 2nd and 8th mechanized corps. East of Kielce, the 18th Rifle Division is concentrated, one reserve division of the 26th Army is approaching Sandomierz, the other is moving southeast along the San River (both divisions are from the Kharkov Military District). The 8th mechanized corps is preparing to strike north into the flank of the enemy's Radom grouping. The Soviet 2nd, 19th mechanized corps, 2nd cavalry corps do not conduct active combat operations and begin to put themselves in order for subsequent operations.

The concentration of German troops west of the Vistula continues. Their concentration is hampered by the actions of Soviet mobile units in the Kielce-Radom area. The 125th Infantry, 100th Light Infantry and 4th Mountain Rifle Divisions, surrounded in the Rzeszow area, were defeated, two divisions of the 30th Rifle Corps began to move west. By evening, a German grouping of two or three infantry and one (60th) motorized divisions was concentrated in the Radom area. The main forces of the 4th and 6th mechanized corps are concentrated against them in the Pulawy area.

The 33rd Rifle Corps approaches Krakow. Against eleven divisions of the 2nd, 19th, 8th mechanized and 5th cavalry corps, 3-4 German infantry divisions operate, which do not form a united front and are not connected by a single command. German

the command is trying to organize a rear defensive line along the Katowice-Czestochowa-Radom line.

Sixth day of hostilities.

Stubborn fighting continues on the Soviet-Finnish border.

The 16th, 18th mechanized and 2nd cavalry corps replaced by rifle divisions begin to move in the direction of the Romanian-Bulgarian border. A coup d'état is taking place in Romania.

337

The German troops surrounded in the Yaroslav region capitulate. Two divisions of the Soviet 49th Rifle Corps begin to move west.

In the morning, the 26th Army, consisting of the 8th Mechanized Corps, the 18th Rifle Division, the 3rd PTABR and 3-4 artillery regiments, began an offensive from the Kielce region to the flank of the Radom grouping. One mechanized division of the 20th mechanized corps and the 6th cavalry division of the 6th cavalry corps advance from the north towards the 8th mechanized corps. Of the four German divisions concentrated in the area of Radom, three have to turn with the front to the south, one - with the front to the north. There are no more forces left to release the troops encircled in the Lublin region.

Attacks by the 4th Panzer Group from the Warsaw area are still unsuccessful.

The German 292nd, 252nd, 134th, 293rd infantry divisions were defeated. The 155th Rifle Division and the 14th Cavalry Division of the 6th Cavalry Corps begin moving towards the Vistula.

Soviet landing forces are landing in the areas of Tomaszow and Katowice. Attacks from the Lublin region are weakening, since the encircled troops are practically out of fuel and ammunition. In addition, the encircled German troops were actually cut into three parts by shock groups of the 5th and 20th armies.

The German command decides to create a new front west of the Vistula to transfer to the south the 3rd tank group, consisting of three tank and two motorized divisions. In addition, ten infantry divisions are being transferred to the south from the 16th and 18th armies of Army Group North. As part of the German troops north of Ostrolenka, one tank and one motorized division remains.

In Germany, total mobilization has been declared. Five infantry divisions are being prepared for redeployment to the east, located in France and Norway. Ten new infantry divisions are being formed, which are armed with anti-aircraft artillery transferred from

338

Reich air defense. Germany cannot form more divisions - there are not enough horses, vehicles and tractors.

Seventh day of hostilities

North of Leningrad, the Soviet 22nd Rifle and 10th Mechanized Corps are slowly advancing towards Helsinki. Even further north, the Soviet 1st mechanized corps, having broken the resistance of the Finnish troops, is advancing in the direction of the Bothnian

bay.

Surrounded in the Rzeszow area, the German troops capitulate. Three divisions of the 8th and 30th rifle corps begin moving towards the Vistula and Dunajc. Two divisions of the 30th Rifle Corps are approaching the Vistula. Altogether, there are already seven

Soviet rifle divisions, six more divisions are on the march one to three daily marches from the Vistula. |

The 2nd mechanized corps and the 5th cavalry corps, having put themselves in order for two days, having approached the 33rd rifle and 19th mechanized corps on the flanks, begin an offensive on Katowice. The Soviet troops are confronted by two German infantry divisions, including one in Katowice. Soviet troops are landing northwest of the city. By evening, the city with the infantry division in it was blocked. Rifle divisions of the 33rd Rifle Corps are moving behind the mechanical units. The German command has to transfer one tank and one motorized division from the 4th Panzer Group to the south. The 4th Panzer Group in the Warsaw area goes on the defensive.

The Radom group of Germans was reinforced by two infantry divisions. The Soviet side is transferring to the Pulawy area one division each from the 14th and 15th mechanized corps, one PTAB and two RGK artillery regiments. Attempts by German troops to form a bridgehead on the eastern bank of the Vistula fail. To the flank

339

The German group is attacked from the north by the 20th mechanized corps and the 6th cavalry corps, from the south by the 8th mechanized corps and two rifle divisions. By evening, under the threat of encirclement, the German troops were forced to begin a retreat from the Vistula.

The 47th Rifle Corps and the 155th Rifle Division reach the Vistula.

The German 4th Panzer Group is reinforced by three infantry divisions. In response, the 7th tank and 29th motorized divisions of the 6th mechanized corps are transferred to the junction of the 13th mechanized corps and the 44th rifle corps. The German attacks are still unsuccessful.

Two rifle divisions of the 16th Army are unloaded in Przemyśl, from where these divisions are transferred further to the west by two motor transport regiments. The railway track in the occupied territories is being changed according to the Soviet standard, and the unloading of the remaining divisions of the 16th Army is scheduled in Rzeszów and Tarnów.

Eighth day of hostilities

Surrounded in the Lublin region, the German troops capitulate. In total, in the encirclement east of the Vistula, up to fifty divisions of the Wehrmacht, including ten tank divisions, perish.

The Soviet troops, which formed the encirclement front, begin to move west. First of all, the 9th, 22nd and 5th mechanized corps, the 57th tank division, which have suffered minor losses, are replenished and restored, which receive the task of concentrating in the Kielce area. German troops leave Radom, which is occupied by the 4th mechanized corps.

From the area north of Kraków, in the direction of Częstochowa, the 19th Mechanized Corps (which took two days to put itself in order) and the two rifle divisions of the 30th Rifle Corps that had approached, launched an offensive. The opposing German troops (up to one DIVISION) withdraw.

340

Ninth day of hostilities

The Soviet 2nd and 19th mechanized corps unite in the area of Częstochowa, blocking the German infantry division stationed there. Southeast of Częstochowa and in the area of Katowice, up to three German infantry divisions were surrounded. They are blocked by five divisions of the 30th and 33rd rifle corps, three divisions of the 8th and 30th rifle corps are approaching the Vistula. The 2nd Cavalry Corps, without encountering resistance, moves in the direction of Breslau (Wrocław). German attempt

command to create a new front along the Warsaw-Katowice line is failing. The divisions transferred from the 3rd Panzer Group and Army Group North have to be redirected on the move - instead of Czystochowa, Breslau, Breslau and Poznan become their destinations.

The newly created Transcaucasian Front and the 53rd Separate Army begin an offensive. Two armies are deployed against Turkey - the 45th and 46th.

The composition of the 46th army is the 3rd, 40th rifle (five rifle and mountain rifle divisions), the 28th mechanized corps, two newly formed cavalry (or mountain cavalry) divisions in the North Caucasus Military District, one newly formed rifle (or motorized rifle) division of the NKVD, 51st (Batum-Akhalkalak) fortified area. The task is to defeat the Turkish troops in the border zone in cooperation with the 45th Army and then strike at Ankara and along the Black Sea coast at Trabzon and Samsun.

The composition of the 45th army is the 23rd and 64th rifle divisions (four rifle and mountain rifle divisions), the 26th mechanized corps, two newly formed cavalry (or mountain cavalry) divisions in the North Caucasus Military District, one newly formed rifle (or motorized rifle) division of the NKVD, 55th (Leninakan) fortified area. The task is to defeat the Turkish troops in the border zone in cooperation with the 45th Army and then strike in the direction of Mersin, Adana and go to the Mediterranean Sea.

341

At the same time, the Black Sea Fleet blocks the Turkish fleet in the Black Sea and lands landings - the 106th Rifle Division in Istanbul with the task of capturing and holding the Bosphorus and Dardanelles, and the 32nd Cavalry Division - in the Zonguldak area with the task of capturing Ankara .

In total, 23 divisions, more than 350,000 personnel, and more than 1,200 tanks were allocated for operations against Turkey.

The 157th Rifle Division was assigned to cover the Black Sea coast, the 156th Rifle Division to cover the Crimea, and one newly formed NKVD Rifle Division to defend Baku.

The 44th Army of the Transcaucasian Front and the 53rd Separate Army, formed from the SAVO troops, are deployed against Iran.

The 44th Army includes the 63rd, 76th, 77th mountain rifle, 24th cavalry, 17th and one mountain cavalry divisions newly formed in the North Caucasus Military District. The army launches a secondary attack in the direction of Tabriz.

The 53rd Army consists of the 58th Rifle Corps (four rifle and mountain rifle divisions), the 27th Mechanized Corps, and the 4th Cavalry Corps (three mountain cavalry divisions). The army delivers the main blow in the direction of Tehran.

The actions of the 44th and 53rd armies are supported by the Caspian flotilla. |

In total, 16 divisions, about 200,000 personnel, and more than 400 tanks were allocated for operations against Iran.

One newly formed cavalry division in SAVO covers the border with Afghanistan.

The transfer and concentration of the armies of the reserve of the High Command continues. The 22nd Army is concentrated between the 8th and 11th armies of the Northwestern Front. The 28th Army is concentrated between the 3rd and 10th armies of the Western Front. The 24th Army remains in place. The newly created 30th Army, consisting of six

342

newly formed rifle (or motorized rifle) divisions of the NKVD, one newly formed cavalry division, and the 14th mechanized corps, which had suffered heavy losses and was withdrawn for reorganization, is concentrated in the Lublin region. The newly created 31st Army, consisting of six newly formed rifle (or motorized rifle) divisions of the NKVD, one newly formed cavalry division, and the 13th mechanized corps, which was withdrawn for reorganization and suffered heavy losses, is concentrated in the Baranovichi area.

tenth day of hostilities

In Finland, Soviet troops reached Helsinki and the Gulf of Bothnia. Finland withdraws from the Axis coalition and begins negotiations with the USSR on the terms of a truce.

Soviet troops in Turkey and Iran are advancing successfully.

The Soviet 16th, 18th mechanized and 2nd cavalry corps cross the Romanian-Bulgarian border. The Bulgarian army does not offer resistance.

The approaching two (tank and motorized) divisions of the 4th Panzer Group strike at the 2nd and 19th mechanized corps in the area of Czystochowa. In the course of a fierce battle, the arrived divisions managed to withdraw the German infantry division blockaded in the city. Southeast of Breslau (Wroclaw), the 2nd Cavalry Corps encounters one German infantry division. The advance of the Soviet troops was stopped, the front line was stabilized for ten days approximately on the line Oppeln (Opole) - Czystochowa - Radom - Warsaw and further along the state border line. The concentration and regrouping of Soviet and German troops continue. Soviet mechanized (2nd, 19th, 8th, 6th, 20th, 17th) and cavalry (5th and 6th) corps are replaced by rifle divisions and withdrawn to the rear for resupplying. Except

the one in you

343

lu are put in order the 15th and 24th mechanized corps. The personnel of the Soviet airborne corps are being assembled.

The Wehrmacht on the Soviet-German front remains combat-ready nine tanks (1st, 2nd, 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, 12th, 19th, 20th) and seven motorized divisions.

Twentieth day of hostilities

German troops in Finland are interned. The Soviet 1st and 10th mechanized corps and five rifle divisions are transferred to the Soviet-German front.

Turkish and Iranian troops are defeated. Soviet troops hold the Bosphorus and Dardanelles, occupy Istanbul, Ankara, Tehran, go to the Mediterranean Sea. The 16th, 18th mechanized, 2nd cavalry corps are reaching the Greek-Bulgarian and Greek-Turkish borders. Rifle divisions of the 9th and 18th armies reach the Romanian-Yugoslav border.

The offensive of the Baltic and the left wing of the Western fronts begins. The main blow in the direction of Danzig (Gdansk) is delivered by the 28th Army, consisting of three rifle divisions, the 6th, 7th mechanized and 6th cavalry corps. Two rifle divisions of the 28th Army continue to unload and are in reserve. To the left of the 28th Army, the 10th Army is advancing as part of the 1st, 5th Rifle and 20th Mechanized Corps.

The 8th Army strikes along the coast of the Baltic Sea on Königsberg. The strike group of the 8th Army consists of the 24th and 28th rifle (four rifle divisions) and the 3rd (transferred from the 11th army) mechanized corps.

The 22nd Army of the Northwestern Front and the 3rd Army of the Western Front launch concentric attacks on Suwalki. Composition of the 22nd Army - four rifle divisions and the 21st mechanized corps, two rifle divisions continue to unload and form a reserve

344

Subsequent operations of the Red Army.

81

army. The shock group of the 3rd Army - the 21st Rifle Corps (two divisions), the 11th and 17th Mechanized Corps.

The reserve of the North-Western Front is the 12th mechanized corps. The 31st Army is transferred to the reserve of the Western Front. In addition, behind the Northwestern Front

345

The concentration of the 1st and 10th mechanized corps, transferred from Finland, begins to begin.

Seventy-five divisions of the North-Western and Western Fronts. Soviet troops rely on fortified areas, the strike groups include four anti-tank artillery brigades, two airborne corps and a large number of RGK artillery. The actions of the Red Army are supported by the Baltic Fleet.

On the left wing of the Western Front, six German infantry divisions were deployed against the 13th and 4th armies, consisting of 12 rifle divisions and one mechanized corps (24th).

On the very first day of the offensive, the defense of the German troops was broken through in all four sectors of the breakthrough. In the area of Danzig, an amphibious assault is landed - a brigade of marines of the Baltic Fleet. Airborne assaults are thrown into the same area.

22nd day of hostilities

The shock groups of the 22nd and 3rd armies complete the encirclement of German troops in the Suwalki area. Four German infantry divisions fall into the "cauldron". The advance of the shock group of the 8th Army was stopped. The strike groups of the 28th and 10th armies continue to advance successfully. From the composition of the mobile reserves of Army Group Center, three tank and two motorized divisions were allocated, which should hit the flank of the strike group of the 10th Army. These divisions begin to move to the northeast.

The left wing of the Southwestern Front begins its offensive. The 6th, 26th, 16th, 21st armies, which include 35 rifle divisions and six mechanized corps (22nd, 9th, 4th, 8th, 19th, 2nd). To the reserve of the South-Western Front

346

the 30th Army is transferred. In total, against more than sixty Soviet divisions, the German command can put up no more than thirty divisions, of which ten are of limited combat capability. .

Eight German infantry divisions were deployed against the right wing of the Southwestern Front as part of the 20th and 5th armies (16 rifle divisions and the 15th mechanized corps) (of which two were of limited combat readiness).

twenty-fifth day of hostilities

Up to five German infantry divisions were surrounded by shock groups of the Southwestern Front in the Breslau area. The German armored and motorized divisions unsuccessfully counterattacked, suffered heavy losses and, leaving tanks and other equipment on the roads, retreated to the northwest. Two Soviet mechanized corps (2nd and 4th) are rapidly moving north towards Danzig.

thirtieth day of hostilities

The Soviet 10th and 28th armies reach Danzig, cutting off the troops of Army Group North and locking them in East Prussia. The Soviet 8th Army, reinforced by the 1st 10th mechanized corps, goes to Königsberg. The 2nd and 4th mechanized corps turned to the east, cutting off the escape route for German troops from the Warsaw and Lodz regions. The 8th mechanized corps occupies Poznan. During the second stage of the Soviet offensive, up to fifty German divisions were surrounded and defeated (of which thirty were from Army Group North).

The Wehrmacht on the Eastern Front has no more than thirty-five combat-ready divisions, of which ten are armored and motorized. With such forces, it is unrealistic to resist the Red Army. Negotiations begin on the terms of Germany's surrender.

Content

Alexey Isaev. RANDOM AND REGULARITIES. TEU Dmitry Khmel'nitsky is talking to Viktor Suvorov.

IF STALIN ATTACKED FIRST POWERFUL 38 Mikhail Baryatinsky. SMALL BLOOD

ULAROM 2 oa eo ee toa 50 Mikhail Meltyukhov. GERMANY IN THE SOVIET

MILITARY PLANNING IN 1940-1941 86 Sergei Kremlev. IF STALIN HIT
159 Alexander Bolnykh. TILZIT DEAD END 191 Dmitry Khmel'nitsky. HISTORY IN THE
SUBJUNCTIVE MOOD oo oao 213 Andrey Burovsky. 225 Valentin Runov. "PREVENTIVE" IMPACT RED
..... DAY "CH"

ARMY IN THE SUMMER OF 1941 EOP I 296

Vladislav Savin. AS IT WOULD BE IN JULY 1941, OR AN OPERATION THAT WOULD
REMAIN NAMEDaaaaaaaaaaaaa. 316

Popular science edition

ALTERNATIVES TO THE GREAT PATRIOTIC

Isaev Alexey Valerievich Suvorov Viktor Baryatinsky Mikhail Borisovich and others.

STALIN'S FIRST IMPACT 1941

Published in the author's edition Managing editor I. Petrovsky Art editor S. Kurbatov

Technical editor V. Kulagina Computer proofreading by I. Kovaleva Proofreader I. Fedorova

Yauza Publishing House LLC 109507, Moscow, Samarkand boulevard, 15

For correspondence: 127299, Moscow, st. Clara Zetkin, 18/5 Tel.: (495) 745-58-23

OOO Publishing House Eksmo 127299, Moscow, st. Clara Zetkin, 18/5. Tel. 411-68-86, 956-39-21. Note glade: mImm.exto.gi E-tai: tyuFeksto.gi

Signed for publication on 23.07.2010. Format 84x108 732. Newton typeface. Offset printing. Conv. oven I. 18.48. Circulation 5000 copies. Order No. 4002482

Printed at JSC "Nizhpoligraph" 603006, Nizhny Novgorod, st. Barbarian, 32.

15VM 978-5-699-43818-1

7 |

85699'438181>

Wholesale of Eksmo books: Eksmo Trading House LLC. 142700, Moscow region, Leninsky district, Vidnoye, Belokamennoye sh., 1, multi-channel phone. 411-50-74. E-taN: geserChopb@eketo-zaie.gi

For questions regarding the purchase of Eksmo books by foreign wholesale buyers, please contact the foreign sales department of Eksmo Trading House E-ta!: imegpaNopaFekzto-zae.gi

ÿnÿegpaÿopa! \$ÿ1ÿÿ: Ipÿetabopa! any other system Rogeyup Saiese Oeraptepi o? Thaaipo Noise "Exto" jog Pei oraeg. ipÿÿegpatsopaÿbekveto-vaÿe .gi

For ordering books for corporate clients, including in a special design, please contact tel. 411-68-59 ext. 2115, 2117, 2118

Wholesale of white paper and stationery for the school and office "Kants Eksmo": Company "Kants-Eksmo": 142702, Moscow region, Leninsky district, Vidnoe-2, Belokamennoye sh., 1, a / box 5. Tel./fax +7 (495) 745-28-87 (multichannel). e-ta!: Caps@ekzto zae.gi, website: mImm.Caps-eKzto.gi

Full range of books published by Eksmo publishing house for wholesale buyers: In St. Petersburg: OOO SZKO, Obukhovskoy Oborony Avenue, 84E. Tel. (812) 365-46-03/04.

In Nizhny Novgorod: OOO Trade House Eksmo NN, st. Marshal Voronov, 3. Tel. (8312) 72-36-70.

In Kazan: Branch of RDC-Samara LLC, st. Frezernaya, d. 5.

Tel. (843) 570-40-45/46.

In Rostov-on-Don: RDC-Rostov LLC, Stachki Ave., 243A.

Tel. (863) 220-19-34.

In Samara: RDC-Samara LLC, 75/1 Kirov Ave., letter "E". Tel. (846) 269-66-70.

In Yekaterinburg: RDC-Ekaterinburg LLC, st. Pribaltiyskaya, 24a. Tel. (343) 378-49-45.

In Kyiv: LLC "RDC Eksmo-Ukraine", Moskovsky avenue, 9. Tel./fax: (044) 495-79-80/81.

In Lviv: TP LLC "Eksmo-Zapad", st. Buzkova, d. 2. Tel./fax (032) 245-00-19.

In Simferopol: Eksmo-Krym LLC, Kyiv st., 153. Tel./fax (0652) 22-90-03, 54-32-99

In Kazakhstan: RDC-Almaty LLP, st. Dombrovsky, d. Za.

Phone/Fax (727) 251-59-90/91. gas-ÿÿÿÿÿÿ@taÿ!.gi

The full range of products of the Eksmo publishing house: In Moscow, in the Novy Knizhny chain of stores:

Central store - Moscow, Sukharevskaya square, 12. Tel. 937-85-81. Volgogradsky prospect, 78, tel. 177-22-11; st. Bratislavskaya, d. 12. Tel. 346-99-95. Information about the stores "New book" by phone. 780-58-81.

In St. Petersburg in the Bukvoed chain of stores:

"Shop on Nevsky", 13. Tel. (812) 310-22-44.

For advertising in the books of the Eksmo publishing house, please contact the advertising department. Tel. 411-68-74.

E The tragedy of 1941 left such a deep wound in people's memory that the scar continues to hurt even seven decades later - fierce disputes about the causes and perpetrators of the disaster still do not subside,

__ and most importantly, whether it could have been avoided.

SHESHU The most sensational alternative was proposed by Viktor Suvorov, who claims that in the summer of 1941 Stalin himself was preparing to attack Nazi Germany and. that if the Red Army had managed to strike first, "catching the Germans on the backswing", the Wehrmacht would have been defeated in a matter of weeks. However, even many of his supporters do not agree with Suvorov on this issue, confident that even in the event of a preemptive strike, the Soviet troops would still suffer a crushing defeat, as evidenced by the unsuccessful actions of the Red Army against Finland. |

VENEV Whose point of view is closer to the truth? Would STALIN'S FIRST STRIKE lead to the triumph of the Red Army - or a defeat even more terrible than in the current reality? And was such a blow even possible? All these questions are answered

leading military historians.

I5VM 978-5-699-43818-1

785699 438181 >